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MODERNISM: AND WHAT IT DID FOR ME



BY
THE ENQUIRING
LAYMAN



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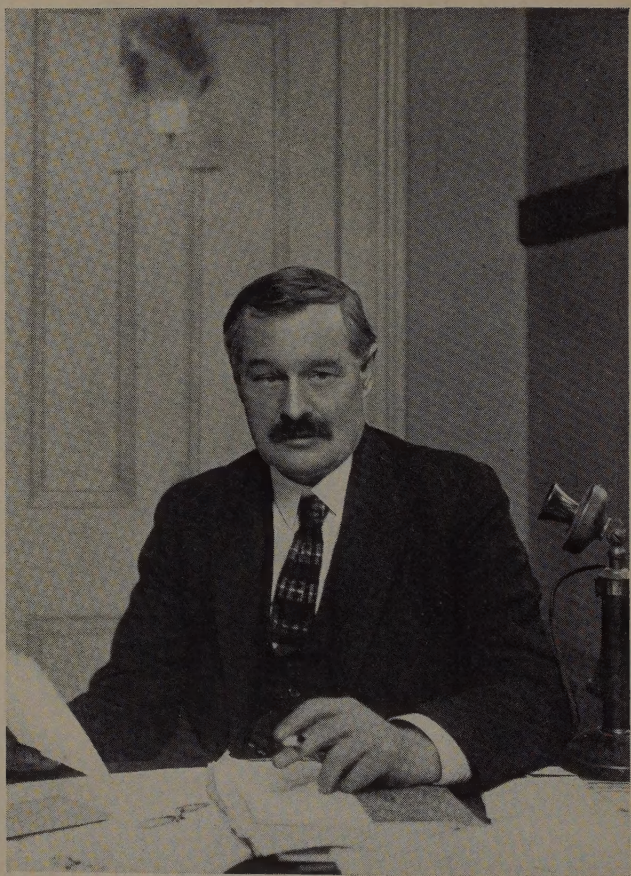
MODERNISM :
AND WHAT IT DID FOR ME

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

BY

THE ENQUIRING LAYMAN

THE BIBLE IN THE LIGHT OF TO-DAY



THE ENQUIRING LAYMAN

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FOREWORD

THE last twenty-five years have seen as big a revolution in Christian theology as in science. Science, we might say truly enough, has given us a new view of the universe. The modernist school of thought has given us a new view, or a new interpretation, of Christianity. I have tried to tell in the following pages what modernism stands for and I have outlined the appeal it makes to intelligent people.

As a foreword I need only repeat the substance of what I have said in a companion volume *The Bible in the Light of To-day*. This little book will have no particular interest for the expert, or the well-informed person. It is an attempt to tell in plain language what I myself have learned from scholars and experts. I have quoted them freely, using sometimes their own language, or paraphrasing it.

There are things about which many of us are not well informed. The Bible, and the origins of Christianity, are two of them. The mind as well as heart of many of us to-day has to be satisfied before the voice of religion is a real voice. No

passive acquiescence is of much value where there is still a doubt, and less so when there is more than a doubt.

I would not rate the general knowledge of my readers very highly if I supposed that they held the same views of the Bible and of traditional beliefs as were held twenty-five or thirty years ago. And yet the other day, when a new Commentary on the Bible, edited by Dr. Gore, was published, the popular Press in big headlines shrieked, "Dr. Gore's Bombshell for Churchmen." His views might have been so described twenty-five years ago and have been thought "destructive" then, but amongst intelligent people to-day they have been accepted for a good many years. The leaders of the modernist movement go a good deal further than Dr. Gore does. But how much of these new views is known to, and accepted or not accepted by, intelligent laymen I do not know.

Most non-churchgoing people to-day, I think, are simply indifferent ; the newer knowledge has been withheld from them too long ; neither the Bible nor ecclesiastical discussion holds any interest for them. Both are, more or less, regarded as intellectual pursuits for the clergy. And yet both subjects throb with interest ; no intelligent person can neglect either.

I have said that I have tried to tell in plain language what I myself have learned from the

critics and the experts. I lay no claims to criticise wiser men. I have simply tried to outline the conclusions they have come to about the Bible and its problems in the light of modern knowledge, modern science and historical criticism. That some such brief outline of modern thought is needed in the interests of those who have not had the opportunity to study the high-priced works in which the experts publish their views, I am certain. Moreover, the experts usually write in the language of experts, and they usually write not for the many, but for the few who take a keen interest in their own subjects.

It is not to be imagined that there are any general *agreed* conclusions to outline. There are not. For example, Dr. Gore in his recent Commentary does not, by a long way, commit himself to so "advanced" views as some other modernist scholars. That will be made plain in the following pages, for I have drawn upon other writers who look upon Dr. Gore's "bombshells" as spent forces and who have launched a few that may be more fitly described as "live" and perhaps "destructive." I have tried to show concisely and clearly what those writers who are termed modernists believe and whither they are tending. My sympathies are all with them.

The substance of several chapters of this book, as in the case of *The Bible in The Light of To-day*, has appeared in the pages of *The*

Outline. The spirit of the age is a spirit of inquiry. Modern science and modern thought have lifted theology to a higher plane. Cramped, cabined and confined by traditional notions and sentiment, it has awakened to new life. We are in a new era ; the faith that rebelled is the faith that is conquering. It is true that what some modernists boldly proclaim other earnest men cannot accept, but everywhere the old school which held to fixed creeds and dogmas to which reason and evidence must needs conform is giving place to the new school of enlightened inquiry and thought.

THE ENQUIRING LAYMAN.

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MODERNISM :

AND WHAT IT DID FOR ME

I OWE to it a great deal. It cleared up much of my mind that was hazy and dark ; it enlarged my vision and clarified my notions. But the terms "modernism" and "modernist" belong to somewhat recent years. I shall therefore go back a bit and begin at the beginning.

I

First, then, what I am about to write is in the nature of a personal narrative, and the reader will understand that, for the moment, I am not stating anything in the nature of final conclusions. We shall come to that. Meanwhile this is but a retrospect of what nine out of every ten of my acquaintances of, shall we say, thirty or thirty-five years ago probably experienced.

The circumstances in which the question, "What must I do to be saved?" was put, by whom and to whom, will be known to every one who knows his Bible. We shall think of the question as a metaphorical one. Meanwhile,

nearly two thousand years have rolled on and life has become more complicated. Science has provided keys to open many doors ; religious theories have become terribly involved.

The Gods laugh in their sleeve
To watch man doubt and fear.
Who knows what to believe
Where he sees nothing clear,
And dares stamp nothing false
Where he finds nothing sure.

Is this, Pausanias, so ?
And can our souls not strive,
But with the winds must go
And hurry where they drive ?
Is Fate indeed so strong,
Man's strength indeed so poor ?

About the time Matthew Arnold wrote these lines I was a young man, a very young man with an opening, enquiring mind roused to acute curiosity because William Ewart Gladstone and Thomas Henry Huxley were just then fighting their memorable battle about the story of the Gadarene swine. Mr. Gladstone maintained that the herd of swine perished in consequence of the entrance into them of the demons by the permission or order of Jesus of Nazareth. Huxley retorted : " Everything that I know of law and justice convinces me that the wanton destruction of other people's property is a misdemeanour of evil example."

Mr. Gladstone stood loyally by the Bible ; he

was slow to give any assent to the conclusions of what in those days was called the Higher Criticism. He stood up, not only for the moral and spiritual authority of the Bible, but he defended the literal truth of the Creation story. He was ingenious but unconvincing. He would have us believe, in the main, that the account in Genesis is scientifically accurate and, of course, known as the result of Divine revelation. "It is doubt and not belief," he said, "which ought to be put upon its trial."

But even in 1889 among thinking people Mr. Gladstone's apologetic for the Creation story and revelation carried little weight, for even at that date it was obviously not in keeping with the conclusions of Science. As a defence of the Bible *on moral and spiritual grounds* it carried as much weight, however, then, as surely it does to-day.

Gladstone was a great figure in my youthful estimation. I remember, however, that I held what I thought his feeble arguments in scanty respect. His vague verbosity terribly ineffective against his great antagonist's definite, clear and convincing style. If he lived to-day Gladstone would wish to re-write and recast his book, *The Impregnable Rock*.

Amongst the suppositions that he considered *erroneous* was that "the conclusions of science as to natural objects have shaken or destroyed the assertions of the early Scriptures with respect

to the origin and history of the world, and of man, its principal inhabitant." And also this he did *not* believe : "That our race made its appearance in the world in a condition but one degree above that of the brute creation." In this Gladstone did not stand alone. We have travelled far since his day.

Books that Influenced Me.

Just about that time, too (1893), Leslie Stephen published his (for me) epoch-making book, *An Agnostic's Apology*. No less engrossing to a quickened mind was John Morley's *On Compromise*, the second edition of which came out about this date. And no less exciting to me was Samuel Laing's *Modern Science and Modern Thought* (1893).

Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* was written twenty years before that date, but I had not made its acquaintance when already my inherited and first-taught religious beliefs had become "clouded with a doubt." But the cloud was not too thick, for I confess that I mentally shrank from the militant Huxley in the pages of *The Nineteenth Century*. His brutal thrusts sometimes made a young sensitive mind *wilt*.

Matthew Arnold was not a man of science as Huxley was. He was Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford. Arnold wrote his *Literature and Dogma* as "an essay towards a better apprehension of the Bible." It was attacked in

certain quarters and subjected to much misrepresentation. The object of *Literature and Dogma* was to reassure those who felt attachment to Christianity, to the Bible, but who recognised the growing discredit befalling miracles and the supernatural.

Arnold's concern was with the natural truth of Christianity. Theologians and popular religion had, he held, given a wrong turn to it all, and presented it to us in a form which is fantastic and false.

But with many then orthodox views Arnold would have nothing to do. The materialistic future state, the materialistic Kingdom of God, of our popular religion, would dissolve, he said, "like some insubstantial vision faded." The fundamental thing for Christians, he maintained, is not the incarnation but the imitation of Christ. In saying so, Arnold was a heretic. He put himself outside the pale altogether when he said further : " Our popular religion at present conceives the birth, ministry, and death of Christ, as altogether steeped in prodigy, brimful of miracle—and miracles do not happen."

All this seems but a memory now, a thing of personal historic interest only. But it was a revolutionary thing only forty years ago. For me it was the death of religious dogma.

Miracles may not happen, but I doubt if Arnold would use his emphatic words to-day.

without qualification. What may *seem* a miracle may be no miracle. More and more it has come to be realised that 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.' Miracles may not happen, but in the spiritual sphere, and in psychology, and in personality, and in reality, we have to account for stranger things than seeming physical miracles. So I thought then ; so I think now with the turn modern science is taking.

As Earl Balfour says, "The excesses of unbelief may be as extravagant as those of belief." The 'spiritual' and the material belong to the same universe ; the unsubstantial world of the unseen and the substantial world that the physicist and the chemist can explore. "Unexampled invasions of the physical sphere by the spiritual are not indeed to be lightly believed. But they are certainly not to be rejected merely because historians cannot bring themselves to accept the miraculous."

I well remember, in my young days, putting the question to a worthy pillar of the Church : "Can I doubt miracles, and remain a member of the Church ?" The answer was so emphatic as to make me almost jump out of my skin.

Leslie Stephen and John Morley.

Forty years ago the Darwinian theory was just beginning to percolate the minds of young

men of my class. Before I knew much about it I was still reading the controversial non-scientific writers. As a trenchant, devastating, clear-thinking writer, Leslie Stephen was supreme. What was he saying in 1889 :—

Let us look on as calmly as may be at the huge turmoil of conflicting controversy ; smile with equal calmness at the bigots who would damn people for losing their way in the dark ; at the pompous dogmatists who would face it out that they can see as clearly as in broad daylight ; at the feather-headed enthusiasts who take the first will-o'-the-wisp for a safe guide, and patch up a new religion out of scraps and tatters of half-understood science ; and at the simple-minded philosophers who fancy in all seriousness that men are about to become reasoning animals. . . .

Let us trust that, somehow or other, the mad bustle will subside in time ; that the great world will blunder in its own clumsy fashion into some tolerable order, and some scum of effete superstition be worked off in the chaotic fermentation.

And John Morley in his *On Compromise* had a sentence that fixed itself in my memory. Here it is.

If the Bible is to be taught only because it is a noble and most majestic monument of literature, it should be taught as that and no more. That a man who regards it solely as supreme literature, should impress it upon the young as the supernaturally inspired word of God and the accurate record of objective occurrences, is a piece of the plainest and most shocking dishonesty.

The young men of that day, then, of my own day, were scanning the horizon for signs of a new

Gospel. Matthew Arnold was using strong language.

Learned pseudo-science applied to the data of the Bible is best called plainly what it is—utter blunder. . . . To try to tinker such criticism only makes matters worse. The best way is to throw it aside altogether, and forget it as fast as possible. . . . Mild defences of it leave on the mind a sense of the defender's hopeless inability to perceive our actual situation ; violent defences read, alas ! only like "*a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*"

Turning up Froude's Essays, I find this passage marked in the margin (I marked a lot of Froude) : " It may be that the existing belief is undergoing a silent modification, like those to which the dispensations of religion have been successively subjected ; or, again, it may be that to the creed as it is already established there is nothing to be added, and nothing any more to be taken from it. At this moment, however, the most vigorous minds appear least to see their way to a conclusion ; and notwithstanding all the school and church building, the extended episcopate, and the religious newspapers, a general doubt is coming up like a thunderstorm against the wind, and blackening the sky. Those who cling most tenaciously to the faith in which they were educated yet confess themselves perplexed. They know what they believe ; but why they believe it, or why they should require others to believe, they

cannot tell or cannot agree. Between the authority of the Church and the authority of the Bible, the testimony of history and the testimony of the Spirit, the ascertained facts of science and the contradictory facts which seem to be revealed, the minds of men are tossed to and fro, harassed by the changed attitude in which scientific investigation has placed us all towards accounts of supernatural occurrences. We thrust the subject aside ; we take refuge in practical work ; we believe perhaps that the situation is desperate and hopeless of improvement ; we refuse to let the question be disturbed. But we cannot escape from our shadow, and the spirit of uncertainty will haunt the world like an uneasy ghost, till we take it by the throat like men."

(I read that when, I suppose I was about twenty-five ; it was written over twenty-five years before then.)

Now, to a young man knowing precious little of the subject-matter of all this discussion, knowing little of the conclusions of criticism or science, what was it that particularly appealed to me in the writings of men like Huxley, Stephen, Arnold and Morley ? Looking back, it was simply their honesty, their hatred of humbug, their sincerity of purpose, and *reasonableness*, that found a response in one's inner consciousness repelled by obscurantism and the language of a theological tongue that was not intelligible.

II

DRIVEN TO THE 'AGNOSTICS'

MEANWHILE I had developed a critical religious outlook. I attended the church of my fathers and listened to many sermons to catch something of the new note, guidance or enlightenment. But no ; the language was the language I could no longer understand—nebulous verbosity, a mystical eloquence adorned by an exuberance of scriptural texts that raised more questions than they answered.

The issues of those orthodox days are dead and buried so far as thinking people are concerned. As the Earl of Balfour has said of these and other discussions, "only students who delight in contemplating the mutations of human beliefs may think it worth while to give them decent sepulture with all the honours of a learned epitaph ; the rest of the world forget that they have ever been."

Unfortunately, there were other and newer views that were not intelligible, to some of us, walking in mental darkness. There was, for instance, the great Caird preaching of a Sunday afternoon, with moving eloquence, in the Bute Hall at Glasgow University. The great scholar was above *our* heads, his theology transcended *our* meaner understandings ; he lifted us to high levels, but he left us bewildered. Had we known more of the rudiments of the new concep-

tions, of a revised version of the Christian religion, of the 'New Theology,' we might have felt satisfied. As it was, we only suspected a conspiracy of silence among preachers, if their inner beliefs too corresponded to the theology of the new divinity professors. The fear of disturbing old cherished traditional beliefs in the minds of the laity and church-goers must have been very great. Or, it may be, the fear of a heresy hunt made preachers wary. Or more likely still, the older ministers were blind to the need, or denied the need, of any revision of established doctrine. *The result in the end was to turn our minds to the writings of the "agnostics."* That, at any rate, was what happened to me. That is what happened to vast numbers. The decline of religion is to be traced to the preachers. Instead of trying to lift the people in the pews to a higher plane, they were content to leave things as they were ; in a word, they were content to come down to the level of the unthinking multitude.

III

AN EXCURSION INTO SCIENCE

IT was in the year 1894 that I bought *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, by Samuel Laing. It was then, according to the title-page, in its "Seventeenth Thousand." Professor Henry Drummond's much-discussed *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* had just been published. (I

had often attended the lectures of that inspiring man.) Laing had added a chapter to this edition, and it dealt with Drummond, whose object in writing his book was to prove that the same laws of nature which prevail throughout the organic and inorganic worlds of Science extended, with an unshaken and identical continuity, into the world of spirit, and gave positive and scientific proof of the dogmas of religion.

“It is not surprising,” wrote Laing, “that this work has had an immense circulation. It professes to do exactly what multitudes of readers are anxious to see done, viz., to reconcile science and religion. Professor Drummond brings to this task many qualifications. He enters the arena, not like the great majority of orthodox writers, armed only with the obsolete bows and arrows of theological infallibility, but equipped with the improved weapons of modern scientific research. He understands what is meant by laws of nature and does not misrepresent or ignore them. He is learned, he is candid, he is sincere. His style is clear, and his arguments and phraseology are such that, while the few who have scientific knowledge can understand and appreciate them, the many, who do not understand, cannot fail to find them profound and convincing where they chime in with their preconceived opinions.”

Laing demolished Drummond, as Huxley had demolished Gladstone. “*Natural Law in the Spiritual World*; it is evident, is simply our old friend, the ‘Shorter Catechism,’ in a scientific dress. In other words, it is the world of Calvinistic Christianity, of the peculiar system of theology which turns on the ideas of original

sin, fall, redemption, regeneration, election, and predestination." Laing prophesied that Drummond's theories would die down like others for "want of lives to live them."

Die down they assuredly did.

Modern Science.

I turned to Laing's "foundations," then, which was *Modern Science*. Here was new light to me ; the glow of mental satisfaction ; a plain story simply told. In a clear, concise, vivid way he pictured the principal results of Modern Science and the revolution it had affected in Modern Thought, at the date he was writing. He presented what had become the common property of thinking minds in a popular way for such persons as lacked time and opportunity for special study. I well remember how it thrilled me. From that day dates my interest in Science.

Science crosses its rivers on stepping-stones. Many new ones have been laid since Laing wrote his popular essays forty years ago. Evolution has now firmly consolidated its position. There are few educated men who do not accept the story of man's descent from an ape-like stock ; few who do not concede to man a life history of one million years ; who do not accept the evidence of our planet's antiquity of many millions of years. We are what the past has made us, physically and mentally.

Over a period of thirty years I have, in my scanty leisure moments of an active business life, followed the new movements and discoveries in Science, in particular those that had to do with evolutionary processes. I shall turn aside for a moment to indicate the trend of my reading ; the new knowledge that came to me.

Science does not speak of "In the beginning." It knows nothing of a beginning. In the beginning, to use the word in a relative sense, before there was such a thing as matter there may have been a pre-material world. But, as Professor J. Arthur Thomson puts it : "If we say 'In the beginning was Mind,' we may be expressing or trying to express a great truth, but we have gone *beyond Science*."

The nebular theory of yesterday pictured the solar system in its genesis as a gigantic glowing mass, spinning slowly and uniformly around its centre. "As the incandescent world-cloud of gas cooled and its speed of rotation increased, the shrinking mass gave off a separate whirling ring, which broke up and gathered together again as the first and most distant planet. The main mass gave off another ring and another till all the planets, including the earth, were formed. The central mass persisted as the sun." We do not now believe that the solar system originated in this way. It is now considered more probable that a passing star, drifting near our sun, caused it to

project filaments of matter that condensed into planets. But these alterations in the details of the nebular theory do not affect the time-scale of the solar system.

All this was not six thousand years ago, but millions upon millions of years. "No one can reverse the cosmic film, so as to make visible what happened so long ago. Yet it may be pointed out that there are nebulae in the sky to-day which are behaving much in the same way as astronomers believed the momentous nebula to have behaved that gave rise long ago to our Solar System." The difference is that these gigantic nebulae are evolving whole stellar systems, not merely a sun with planets.

How Life Came.

How life came to earth in the first instance is still a matter of intelligent speculation.

At some point in time life manifested itself on earth. Professor J. Arthur Thomson strikes a responsive note when he says :—

If we should get more light on possible steps by which simple living creatures may have arisen from not-living materials, this would not greatly affect our general outlook on life, though it would increase our appreciation of what is often labelled as "inert" matter. If the dust of the earth did naturally give rise very long ago to living creatures, if they are in a real sense born of her and of the sunshine, then the whole world becomes more continuous and more vital, and all the inorganic groaning and travailing becomes more intelligible.

Science as yet knows but little about the first beginning of life on earth. It is not explained. The speculative picture of the first living creatures upon the earth or, rather, in the water that covered the earth, is that of simple creatures such as those living to-day which we call Bacteria and one-celled animalcules, simple creatures "which have not taken any very definite steps towards becoming either plants or animals. No one can be sure, but there is much to be said for the theory that the first creatures were microscopic globules of living matter able to live on air, water, and dissolved earth."

From such a source we have a hint of the original beginnings of all living things. At some uncertain, inconceivably distant date, living creatures appeared on earth. "However it may have come about, there is no doubt at all that one of the first great steps in Organic Evolution was the forking of the genealogical tree into Plants and Animals—the most important parting of the ways in the whole history of Nature."

The Emergence of Man.

Half a million or a million years ago, or more, man emerged from the stock of anthropoid apes. There was first the transition from the ancestors of apes and men to the man-ape, and from the man-ape to man. The first of these is represented by the fossil remains known as *Pithecanthropus*

erectus, which, according to Sir Arthur Keith, was "a human being in stature, human in gait, human in all its parts, save its brain." Man, then, served an "arboreal apprenticeship" and in time became "a terrestrial journeyman." In other words, he came down from the trees. From the common anthropoid stem of the genealogical tree there sprang separately the African race, the Australian, the Mongolian, and the European races.

This, then, is the story of Evolution, and so far as Darwinism is concerned, Professor Keith told us at a recent meeting of the British Association "it is firmly established."

The theory of Evolution is no doubt established, but the last word on Darwinism has not yet been said. There are gaps to be filled in.

Professor J. Arthur Thomson, the most lucid popular exponent of science, crystallises the problem of the evolution of the Mind thus :—

A human being begins as a microscopic fertilized egg-cell, within which there is condensed the long result of time—Man's inheritance. The long period of nine months before birth, with its intimate partnership between mother and offspring, is passed as it were in sleep, and no one can make any statement in regard to the mind of the unborn child. Even after birth the dawn of mind is as slow as it is wonderful. To begin with, there is in the ovum and early embryo no nervous system at all, and it develops very gradually from simple beginnings. Yet as mentality cannot come in from outside, we seem bound to conclude that the potentiality of it—whatever that means—resides in the individual from the very first. The particular kind of activity

known to us as thinking, feeling, and willing, is the most intimate part of our experience known to us directly, apart from our senses, and the possibility of that must be implicit in the germ-cell. Now what is true of the individual is true also of the race—there is a gradual evolution of that aspect of the living creature's activity which we call mind. We cannot put our finger on any point and say: "Before this stage there was no mind." Indeed, many facts suggest the conclusion that wherever there is life there is some degree of mind—even in the plants. Or it might be more accurate to put the conclusion in another way, that the activity we call life has always in some degree an inner or mental aspect.

There is no evidence, he thinks, of any rare element in living matter, and no evidence of any peculiar form of energy. "There is, of course, the promise and potency of that great imponderable that we call 'Mind,' but who can be sure there is anything 'inanimate'? 'In the Beginning was Mind.'"

Professor Julian S. Huxley reminds us that :—

From the earliest times human beings have pondered over the nature of life. At the beginning they tended to think of all things in terms of themselves—to read a life into the wind, a spirit into the river, a soul like their own into the birds and beasts, nor did man even hesitate, as Voltaire so succinctly put it, "to construct God in his own image."

And as the same writer adds :—

This projection of oneself into the objects of the world around, or anthropomorphism as it is generally called, is, from any scientific or rational point of view, one of the cardinal vices of the mind. To discover the real nature of things, we must

discard all prejudices, all purely instinctive ways of thinking, and labour along the stony but sure path of reason and verification. . . .

At the outset, it seemed self-evident to anthropomorphism that all living things were alive because endowed with some vital principle, some spirit of life, which departed from them at death. But all recent work is making it ever more probable that there is no such specific vital force, and that life is but one name for the manifestations of particular types of matter of very complicated construction.

The Latest Marvel.

And here we come to one of the latest marvels of modern science that held particular fascination for me. The thrilling story of disintegrating atoms. Still less than some forty years ago, the business of the chemist was to study matter, the constitution of solid bodies and the nature of chemical elements. The physicist studied what were called "forces"—light, heat, sound, electricity and gravitation. It took chemists thousands of years to discover that water is composed of nothing but oxygen and hydrogen. How amazing are the discoveries of the last twenty or thirty years very few thoroughly realise. The province of the physicist and the chemist are now intermingled. It is within the memory of the present generation that by means of the dynamo electricity was "discovered," if we may use the word. More recent still, the secret of the electric-magnetic waves that made "wireless"

possible. Already it has annihilated space and time. *Electricity is both energy and matter in one.* It may be, we know not what. I shall come back to that. Physicists and chemists, working hand in hand, revealed the secret of the atom, perhaps the most fascinating discovery in the history of science. The electrical theory of matter acquainted us with the fact that all varieties of matter are ultimately composed of specks of electricity.

We know now that the constitution of *every* kind of atom of *every* element, in its ultimate analysis, is the same. Every atom of every element turns out to be—electricity, a unit of negative electricity, called an electron, rotating round a positive nucleus of electricity, built up of units of positive electricity called protons, combined with a certain number of electrons. Thus nothing but electrons and protons is involved in any atom. A certain diverse grouping of these tiny invisible particles of electricity constitutes the atom of all the different elements. In hydrogen we seem to have the most primitive form of matter. Its atom consists of one proton and one electron. The one primordial thing then, out of which everything in the world, including human bodies, is made up, is the one thing which we call electricity. That is the electron theory. All matter is seemingly nothing but a manifestation of electricity.

No Answer Yet.

But—there is no answer, as yet, to the question what *is* this entity, what *is* Electricity in itself? For what more the “quanta” theory of radiating energy may reveal we must wait.

All unknown to us, the electron has been at work since the beginning of time. Electrons and protons form atoms, atoms form themselves into molecules, and molecules, small and large, are the bricks from which Nature builds up every kind of material substance.

Here, then, was a new view of matter. But that is not all, for recent study of the electron has led to unexpected results; its activities suggest unsuspected properties, but these theories are too difficult to go into here; these things take us beyond our present province and are dealt with in another volume of this series. All I need say about the quantum theory and of the relativity theory is—and the words are the words of an eminent scientist—*these are not merely new discoveries as to the content of the world; they involve changes in our mode of thought about the world.*

IV

NEW RELIGIOUS CONCEPTIONS

BUT I must pass from science for the time being. I am losing the thread of my discourse. But not quite, as we shall see. The religious excur-

sions of my youth led me into many strange paths and many quagmires of doubt and difficulty. Science led me into new paths, revealed to me a new world, a new *conception* of religion. I cleared the old theological catchwords and shibboleths from my mind. I ceased to take any lively interest in the doctrinal side of religion, in the form of Christianity that is wedded to Church dogmas, ritual, and to ecclesiastical tradition. If there seems a hiatus, then, in this story of a spiritual pilgrimage, that was the hiatus. It was an almost imperceptible, unnoticed development. At times one may get drawn into the stream of religious discussion, and it is often at these times one feels the mental need of more or less defining beliefs to one's self, impelled to take an interest in current literature and debate, to mark the trend of religious thought.

And it is just during this interval—from the point of twenty-five years back, up to to-day—that the greatest strides in scientific achievement and in modernist thought have taken place. It is literally true that, in that time, the whole conception of the physical world has radically changed ; we think of the material universe in a way very different from that prevailing at the beginning of the present century. I have referred to two epoch-making discoveries. We think of Rutherford and the electron theory, and of Einstein and the theory of relativity ; far-

reaching in their conception and far-reaching in the inferences which seem to underlie them.

To return then to the sphere of religion ; it is here too within the period named, that "modernists" (I use the term in its wider meaning) have come so much to the front. I was drawn to the literature of the modernists and appreciated the great changes that have come about, not only in conceptions of the Bible itself, but in the interpretation of Christian faith. My father, if he were to come back to earth, would regard the Christianity of the modernists as a new religion. It is ; and yet it is not. As to the Bible, the day of "reconcilers" has passed away ; most have accepted Matthew Arnold's plea and regard it as literature. I shall not dwell here on the Bible as it is viewed in the light of to-day because I have done that elsewhere.* But, it may be worth while inquiring, what, to-day, is the attitude of the advanced leaders in the Church of England to the Bible ? We shall let three leading divines speak.

Here is a quotation from a sermon preached in Westminster Abbey by the Bishop of Birmingham in the presence of the boys of Westminster School:—

I prophesy that among them there are not a few who will pass through periods when they distrust and dispute the religious message which the Abbey exists to proclaim. What advice shall

* See *The Bible in the Light of To-day*.

I give to boys born to live in such an era ? Shall I say : 'Cling to the old faith ?' I say rather : 'Seek truth. Rejoice that you live in one of the greatest eras of scientific progress in the history of humanity. Welcome new discoveries with an open mind. Reverence the great men who make them. But remember that behind all the new knowledge the fundamental issues of life will remain veiled.'

What should be our attitude to the biological doctrine of evolution ? Shall we suggest doubts when in reality no doubts exist ? Shall we falsify Christian history and use the falsification to commend Darwinism as though it were no novelty ? Or shall we honestly welcome new knowledge and admit that some traditional dogmas of Christian belief must be changed ? To-day there is, among competent men of science, unanimous agreement that man had been evolved from an ape-like stock. . . . Darwin's assertion that man has sprung from the apes has stood the test of more than half a century of critical examination. As a result the stories of the creation of Adam and Eve, of their primal innocence and of their fall, have become for us folklore. But by the men who built up Catholic theology they were accepted as solid fact. Man's special creation was one of the primary assumptions of the Catholic system. Darwin's triumph has destroyed the whole theological scheme. Many of us rejoice, for we regard the assertion that any Church is infallible, as alike impudent and dangerous.

Some are toying with the idea of a pre-mundane fall—some calamity of disobedience in the heavens, prior to man's appearance on the earth, a tragic event which brought evil into the scheme of creation. For such an idea there is not a jot of evidence that can be seriously put forward, and shows how amazingly unscientific in temper some of our theologians continue to be. Others who shrank from such flights of fancy were suggesting that, while man is physiologically a descendant of the apes, his mind is due to a special Divine act of creation. Such a contention cannot be upheld. The human mind has been derived by evolution from the intelligence of lower animals,

just as the human body has been evolved from the body of some primitive vertebrate. . . . In fact, man is not a being who has fallen from an ideal state of perfect innocence ; he is an animal slowly gaining spiritual understanding and with the gain rising far above his animal ancestry. . . .

So I would conclude, that on the whole, the modern scientific view of the origin of man's body and mind agrees well with Christ's teaching. But it cannot be reconciled with certain statements of St. Paul, nor with a belief in the infallibility either of the Bible or the Church, nor with the acceptance of some of the main strands of traditional Catholic theology. Yet are these facts of any importance ? Why do men desire so often to preserve old errors ? . . . Naturally the men of science to whom the quest of truth is one of life's greatest joys are contemptuous of such ignorance, magic and fear. We who profess to follow Christ ought to share their contempt.

And, the irony of it, these are boys who are probably being taught to regard the Bible as, if not an inspired book, at least as something very different from what the Bishop preaches. But that is not his fault. I am on the side of the Bishop here.

Another Bishop.

And here is what another Bishop, Bishop Gore, who is not among the most ' advanced ' moderns, said a week earlier :—

We are nourishing a vain hope if we suppose that the early chapters of Genesis or the stories about Daniel and Enoch are ever going to be accepted as history. They have none of the characteristics of history as real science has learned to detect them, and it is no good kicking against facts. We will merely delay the necessary adjustment of Christianity to the new world

of ideas by going on murmuring and perplexing the minds of our children, instead of being perfectly frank with our own minds and with others. When we make that heroic resolution we shall find that, if we lose something we shall have gained more. The Old Testament will become not a less profitable, but a more profitable thing, when we admit that, by its nature, it is imperfect and contains a vast deal of barbarism. It is no good playing the Canute. You must have the courage frankly to accept the indisputable verdicts of historical science.

The most outspoken of all divines is the Dean of St. Paul's. He has said :—

Science has been the slowly advancing Nemesis which has overtaken a barbarized and paganized Christianity. She has come with a winnowing fan in her hand, and she will not stop till she has thoroughly purged her floor. She has left us the divine Christ, whatever may be the truth about certain mysterious events in His human life. But assuredly she has not left us the right to offer wheedling prayers to a mythical Queen of Heaven ; she has not left us the right to believe in such puerile stories as the Madonna-stamp on hailstones, in order to induce a comfortably pious state of mind.

Expressions such as I have quoted are no exception.

V

A HOUSE DIVIDED

WHERE are we to look, then, for the New Gospel of Religion ? Not to the Bishops as a body. They are a house divided. Bishop Barnes frankly admits that "*Darwin's triumph has destroyed the whole theological scheme.*" What is the new scheme which Dr. Barnes has to replace

the old? Bishops tell us what they do not believe, they refrain from telling us in the same plain way what they do believe. Some one said the other day, "No one will ever know what any Bishop really believes." They are past-masters in muffling their opinions.

But let us be just to the Bishops. Science has a free hand to change rapidly, and does. A Bishop has not. Science may publish new "truths" daily, regardless of consequences. Bishops have to be more careful. The spiritual world of millions is at stake. You cannot blot out the past with a sponge. You cannot take a fresh sheet of paper and begin *de novo*, as if the past had never been. Life may be creeping upwards, but its roots are rooted in the past. Ideals are not realised by throwing expediency to the winds. The puzzle about the Bishops extends to fundamentals. What is essential in doctrine to one is not to another. That is true at least of their utterances. But charity covers a multitude of sins, and no doubt their charity respects each other's convictions. If some quotations I have given do not touch fundamentals I do not know what does.

When the Bishop of Gloucester says: "The essential and fundamental doctrines of Christianity have never varied," I leave him in the company of Mr. Sidney Dark, editor of the *Church Times*, who says: "The man who denies

the assertions of the creeds may be a Bishop of the English Church, but he is not a Christian." I leave them both in the company of those who think that the world is flat, that the sun moves round the earth, that our planet is the centre of the universe. In these days such people have only an antiquarian interest.

A man, even if he is a Bishop, who says the Christian doctrine has "never varied," is like the proverbial old lady trying to stop the incoming tide with her mop. He may, and doubtless does, hold firmly that certain doctrines which he has defined, or interpreted to his own satisfaction are fundamental and vital. In that restricted sense they may never have been varied ; they never will be varied. But I am not numbered among those who feel able to accept the principle of Authority, the authority of an ' infallible ' book, the authority of an infallible Church, nor the " authority " of corporate spiritual experience, or any other " seat of authority." Volumes have been written to explain various theories of authority, few, I have ever read, have made any impression on my mind. Of course orthodoxy in many spheres of life and belief has its important function ; if a man would steer his ship he must have something to steer by ; he must have convictions of some kind ; he must rely, oftener than not, on faith in the better knowledge and wider experience of other of his fellow human beings.

Mr. Gilbert Chesterton says rightly enough :

The most practical and important thing about a man is still his view of the universe. We think that for a landlady considering a lodger, it is important to know his income, but still more important to know his philosophy. We think that for a General about to fight an enemy, it is important to know the enemy's numbers, but still more important to know the enemy's philosophy.

We must have definite principles, which need not mean unchangeable, fixed ideas. Science has often changed its views, philosophy been at fault, and often theories thought proved have been found wanting.

A scaffolding is only of use to erect a building. The Bible is literature, and it is a truism that the spiritual ferment of each age has given rise to the literature of that age. That is as true of ancient Hebrew literature as it is of our own to-day. To say anything else is pure perversity.

The difference between the authority of the kind I have been speaking and the authority of Science is plain. Science, if asked to produce its credentials concerning any belief or theory, says, "there they are, examine them for yourself." If they do not stand the test they have no claim to be believed. This is the kind of authority with which one cannot quarrel. It is the authority of Mr. Chesterton's landlady ; she acts on her own formulated beliefs and experience, not on what

she is told that she *must* believe on the authority of others.

Is it a Parallel?

To any one who reads the signs of the times it is plain enough that institutional Christianity stands at the parting of the ways. Is it not true that Christianity itself is in danger? The Dean of St. Paul's says 'we are left with the divine Christ'; that is true, but he throws doubt upon 'the truth about certain mysterious events in His human life.' Can we separate the two? The uncertainties of Christian belief are washing away the foundations because the builders are not agreed upon the repairs. Are we not living in times, in part, exactly parallel to Gibbon's description of the fall of Paganism in his famous fifteenth chapter of "The Decline and Fall"? Paganism was still the religion of Rome, "but the religious sentiments were loose and uncertain." The Pagan priests and the ministers of Polytheism, "for the most part men of a noble birth, and of an affluent fortune, performed with cold indifference the ancient rites according to the laws and fashion of their country." The contagion of sceptical writings was diffused far beyond the number of their readers. Gibbon wrote :—

The fashion of incredulity was communicated from the philosopher to the man of pleasure or business, from the noble to the plebeian, and from the master to the menial slave who

waited at his table, and who eagerly listened to the freedom of his conversation. On public occasions the philosophic part of mankind affected to treat with respect and decency the religious institutions of their country ; but their secret contempt penetrated through the thin and awkward disguise ; and even the people, when they discovered that their deities were rejected and derided by those whose rank or understanding they were accustomed to reverence, were filled with doubts and apprehensions concerning the truth of those doctrines to which they had yielded the most implicit belief.

And thus fell religious Paganism, to give place to something better. And thus to-day that something is falling, too. Institutional Christianity is derided by its own priests. An eminent Dean has said :—

Our answer to the indictment against Christianity is that institutional religion does not represent the Gospel of Christ, but the opinions of a mass of nominal Christians. It cannot be expected to do much more than look after its own interests and reflect the moral ideas of its supporters.

And again :—

Institutional Christianity may be a legitimate and necessary historical development from the original Gospel, but it is something alien to the Gospel itself.

The point need not be elaborated ; it is a commonplace of the leading divines. They are admittedly in a hopeless *impasse* with regard to dogma. Disputes with reference to ritual must be wearying most of them to death. Plainly a reconstruction is demanded. We are told :—

The new type of Christianity will be more Christian than the old ; because it will be more moral. A number of unworthy

beliefs about God are being tacitly dropped, and they are so treated because they are unworthy of Him.

. . . I believe, however, that the aberrations or exaggerations of institutionalism have been, and are, more dangerous, and further removed from the spirit of Christianity than those of mysticism, and that we must look to the latter type, rather than to the former, to give life to the next religious revival. ("Outspoken Essays.")

Devastating Criticism.

The devastating criticism by Church of England leaders of their own Church ritual and dogmas leaves the plain man befogged and bewildered. Even the sacred doctrines of the Sacraments are assailed by Bishops like Dr. Barnes and others. Through the cloud of these professional witnesses no clear beacon is to be discerned to light the church pilgrim to any path from which he will not be quickly jolted by Napoleonic theologians. Dogmas, formulas, and doctrinal tests have no longer any authority, any significance. They may be interpreted according to individual taste. When a new deacon solemnly declares that he "assents to the Thirty-nine Articles" and that he "believes the doctrine therein set forth to be agreeable to the word of God," he can do so with any mental reservations he likes, if he is not over nice about solemn declarations. "He can," as Bishop Gore says, "no longer fairly be regarded as bound to particular phrases or expressions in the Articles." And yet this same Bishop has said he will admit

no one into Holy Orders who does not *ex animo* believe the creeds, and he has stigmatised as morally dishonest ministers who serve the Church while harbouring doubts about the physical miracle known as the Virgin Birth.

What can the plain man make out of all this ?

It may well be asked : " Is it likely that the plain Englishman will ever allow that an ostensibly historical proposition may be false as a matter of fact, but true for faith ? " As a thing for plain honesty is it possible for an honest-minded man to give a solemn general assent to the Articles and yet feel himself free to repudiate any " particular phrases or expressions " which do not please him ? Truly many a Bishop must have sore arguments with his own conscience.

Meanwhile, we can only sit and marvel at the mental gymnastic feats of the controversialists. The Bible as a record of true historical documents is dethroned ; the " antiquated theory of Inspiration " has gone ; inspired prophecy is out of date ; miracles have gone ; dogmas and creeds are in the melting-pot ; " the Deuteronomic catalogue of blessings and curses to those who obey or disobey " has passed into the limbo ; ritual is a huge turmoil of conflicting controversy ; the Church as an institution has lost its power.

And yet—neglecting this, that, and the other school of critics and expositors—the general outline of the development of Christianity is clear

enough, if we leave the experts to themselves—to revel in textual criticism, to discuss the authenticity of various documents, to fight their battles on many fields. In the result, all of us may be the better for the free discussion. But the uninstructed in such intricacies must stand aloof. “No one but a fool insists on his ‘right to his own opinion’ with his lawyer or his doctor.” We need not, however, be without opinions or conclusions of our own on the vital questions—if we have taken some trouble over them.

I have read a good deal of Science ; I have read a good deal of Theology. The strange paradox that strikes me to-day is this : While many of our men of science (I could give a dozen eminent names) tend to a more and more reverent and spiritual attitude and outlook, the Bishops and ecclesiastics become more and more involved in theological and institutional church controversies that have no pragmatic value and little relation to the spiritual life of mankind.

The Case of Canute.

“What may the clergy believe ?”—that is the title of an article by the Dean of St. Paul’s, in a London newspaper on the day I am writing this. Never, the Dean says, have the difficulties been greater than they are to-day. I wish to make a comment here and will dwell for a moment on this article. The Dean is reviewing

a book, *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture* which is edited, and partly written, by Bishop Gore. The tenour of Dr. Gore's article is on the lines of quotations I have given on a previous page. Dr. Gore re-states some of the conclusions of modern Biblical critics. But he is not prepared to go so far as the most "advanced" scholars—Dean Inge for example, or Professor Peake, to whose commentary on the Bible "this volume (of Dr. Gore) was planned as a counter-blast." So the Dean states. Dr. Gore and his friends "though they are willing to surrender the historical accuracy of anything which is recorded only in the Bible, refuse to call in question *anything which is also asserted in the Creeds.*" It is the old story: the writers of this book start with certain *fixed assumptions*, to which reason and evidence have to conform. The Dean is impatient, almost scornful. Dr. Gore will go so far; but not so far as the more "advanced" men. Dr. Gore is looked up to for guidance, for a "lead" by a large body of the clergy—which explains the caustic comment of the Dean of St. Paul's: "Bishop Gore's masterful personality has long set the standard of permissible freedom for the parochial clergy. What he has sanctioned may be said from the pulpit without fear of getting the preacher into trouble. And he has now sanctioned a little more than he has done before. In other words,

this book marks the exact position of Bishop Canute's chair at the beginning of 1929."

Note, Bishop Canute's chair ! To King Canute, the advancing waves on the sea-shore showed no regard for his kingship. The chair can be moved as the tide necessitates. "Dr. Gore and his friends are satisfied that the throne now stands firmly at high-water mark. They have said this before." The throne may be moved higher up the beach as the advancing waves of 'modernism' compel ! Is that it ? Fighting a slow retreat. The same old, half-way house policy to which I have referred, that began the emptying of the churches thirty years back. Churches may be emptied that some semblance of traditionary dogma and creeds may remain.

And the high gods know in a minute
That it isn't the genuine thing.

Shall I recall the Leslie Stephen of 1889 ? "Let us look on as calmly as may be at the huge conflict of conflicting turmoil ; smile with equal calmness at the bigots who would damn people for losing their way in the dark ; at the pompous dogmatists who would face it out that they can see as clearly as in broad daylight."

But once more, let us not be unjust ; the difficulties in a time of transition like this are real enough. I am with the Dean of St. Paul's in this : "In my opinion, the only way of meeting

them is to admit the absolute impossibility of setting up a uniform standard of orthodoxy which can be imposed upon the educated and uneducated alike. *The Christian philosopher and the dear old lady cannot have the same theology, though they may have the same religion. Christendom is not divided in the chambers where good people pray; but in theology there is only one way to be perfectly orthodox, and that is not to think of it at all.*" (The italics are mine.)

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Conspiracy of Silence.

Although I had ceased, as I have said, to be interested in the creeds and dogmas of an institutional Christianity, I have followed for a good many years now the trend of modernist thought. During these years—although the pulpit for the most part keeps to its conspiracy of silence (on the plea that “the Christian philosopher and the dear old lady cannot have the same theology”)—there has been a body of honest-minded, courageous writers who have spoken out.* Eminent men, Christian scholars, bishops and deans, who have pursued a policy of frank exposition. If “the dear old lady,” or “the old-fashioned Evangelicals,” or the funda-

* I would have liked to refer to other names not mentioned in this little book, such as Canon Raven, Glover, Oman and others, all thoroughly evangelical yet ultra-modernists.

mentalists, or the lazy-minded, are ignorant of the newer views it is not for any lack of the means of knowing. We are all slow, after middle age, to change our views. Those who, knowing all about these newer views, and the effort to re-construct Christianity, elect to hold by the old faiths have every right to do so. Religion is nothing if it is not a personal thing. There are still eminent enough upholders of traditional belief. But the point is this : is it true that in the pulpit there is this conspiracy of silence, or the lack of will to bring traditional faith and obsolete conceptions more into harmony with the new knowledge of our time and modern thought ? And because of this failure educated people have turned away from the Church.

Dr. Bethune-Baker, a leader of the modernist movement, has said : " I take it again that our chief difficulty is due to the fact that so many of the congregations with which we have to deal are composed of people who must be described as ' backward ' in all these respects—at least as facing backward rather than forward. I remember well the kind of conspiracy of silence that characterised many of my own honoured teachers ; and, in general, the clergy have been slow to assimilate the new knowledge and chary of indicating it to those whose religious ideas they could influence."

On the very day I am writing this Principal

Garvie is reported in *The Times* as saying at a conference of Educational Associations: "I appeal to ministers to ignore the 'old women' of both sexes, and to speak out frankly and courageously, for large numbers of young people are being lost to religion because the pulpit has not frankness and courage."

It may be unfair to speak of a conspiracy of silence, for the difficulties are great and the Dean of St. Paul's has voiced, fairly enough, the nature of the difficulties in an apologetic against a charge of seeming dishonesty of mind among the clergy. He writes: "the position of the preacher is not at all easy. He knows that 'Christianity is a divine life, not a divine science'—to quote a seventeenth century divine—and that his business is to make his flock better Christians, not better philosophers. But he knows also that his flock expect him to say some things which, if he is a scholar and thinker, he cannot accept, and, what is even worse, to use arguments which he knows to be sophistical and unfair.

"He cannot merely pour out his own thoughts, which would be unintelligible to almost all his hearers and infuriating to not a few of them. And yet the obligation of honesty is imperative.

"Personally, I try never to use an argument which I believe to be unsound, and never to profess belief in a doctrine which I think doubtful or untrue. But, in speaking for example of the

future life, the language of poetry and imagination, rather than that of science, cannot be dispensed with. We have to make real to ourselves things that eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and we must use the imagery of the world that we know.

“ I am content to emphasise those parts of the faith which are real and vital to myself. It is not a complete presentation ; but in London, at any rate, it is easy to hear other sides from other preachers, and I think the younger generation are, above all things, anxious to know that their teachers are honest men. The old philosopher Pythagoras is said to have summed up the duty of man in two Greek words—‘ Be true. Do good.’ This does not leave much unsaid.”

It is not the business of any one to inquire directly into personal thoughts “ which would be unintelligible to almost all hearers and infuriating to not a few of them.” That is a man’s own affair. We can think of some of these “ thoughts ” perhaps as touching some of the problems that scholars and leading modernists debate amongst themselves. For the moment I shall confine myself to the work of some writers that I have felt of interest to myself as an enquiring layman ; books and articles that deal with modernist views.

VI

THE WAY OF MODERNISM

IF I were to set out on a quest of the way of modernism, the first question I should put to the modern Gamaliel at whose feet I sat would be : "How does the New Testament stand ?" The Old Testament, he would tell me, has emerged from the hands of modern criticism bereft of its old prestige. Its sacred nature remains, and so do the reasons why we should respect and admire it. It is national literature, and tradition and folklore form part of every national literature ; no educated person claims for it direct revelation ; it is not a unity but of composite structure ; its narratives come from many sources ; it is a mingling of ancient legend, history and biography, *all welded together by a series of redactions or editings* ; it is idealised history (written from a religious point of view), more or less authentic, of the Hebrew people, of their formal priestly religion, and the ceremonial duty of the Law ; of prophecies concerning a coming ideal kingdom for the race ; of the records of trials and tribulations, of songs of victory and lamentations of adversity, songs sung round the camp fires and great outbursts of sublime poetry. Throughout, suffused with religious feeling and ardent aspiring after Jehovah, the one God of one people.

All this I have gone into in a companion

volume to the present one (*The Bible in the Light of To-day*). I shall take up here the story at the point we left off in that book (the Old Testament), and consider, in the light of modern opinion, the bearings the New Testament has on the Old. A much more difficult task.

I shall follow the same plan of quoting freely from authorities ; no layman without any claims to expert knowledge can do otherwise. But "authorities" are numerous and diverse in their views. My text being, "What Modernism has done for Me," I shall give prominence to the views of the Modernist school.

The New Testament.

How does the New Testament stand, then, in the light of to-day ? Is it on a par with the records of the Old Testament ? I cannot answer the question with a direct "Yes" or "No."

I shall begin with a quotation from Dr. Bethune-Baker. You will find it in his recent book, *The Way of Modernism*. "At the time when the controversy roused by *Lux Mundi* was at its height, Archbishop Benson asked the question, 'May not the Holy Spirit make use of myth and legend?' He had in mind some of the stories of the Old Testament only. But the thirty-five years which have run since then have gone far to do away with the idea that the mentality of the writers of the New Testament was

essentially different from that of the writers of the Old Testament. We may hold that the New Testament contains much more of nearly contemporary and trustworthy history than the Old Testament, but I at least cannot doubt that it contains also legends and fairy-tales and a good deal of apparently straightforward narrative that describes, not things that actually happened as they happened, but, rather, what we are accustomed now to call the 'religious experience' whether of Jesus Himself or of some of those who were associated with Him. About all such stories we ought to make it clear that they are like pictures of the symbolic kind—not the purely imaginative kind that aim at expressing only an idea of something that might be, but the kind that employ various forms of imagery to give to others a true impression of something actually felt or experienced. In such cases nowadays most of us would say I felt this or that, I thought this or that, the idea came to me, and so on. In the stories in the Gospels I have in view this kind of experience is narrated much more objectively. In some cases we can see the narrative grow in this kind of objectivity when we compare the earlier with the later versions."

All this would not command the assent of some ; it would be "infuriating to not a few of them." I am not concerned with that. I assent to it, and I am telling my own story.

The Gospels.

I shall not enter into such questions as the origin of the Books of the New Testament, when, and by whom they were written, or of the formation of the Canon. That is outside the scope of this little book ; neither am I disposed to assemble the varying views of Biblical scholars on these points. Most people know that the writers for the most part, were men who had not known Jesus personally. Over thirty years passed after the death of Jesus before any of the Gospels were written.

The earliest of the Gospels to be written was that according to *St. Mark* ; probably written about the year A.D. 70, though it may be some ten years older. Its author was John Mark, a companion of St. Paul who, it is very unlikely, ever saw Jesus. "When the men who had known Jesus were passing away, St. Mark wrote down the honest, effective, oft-told story" (Bishop Barnes).

Matthew and Luke then took the Gospel of St. Mark (and an early document now lost) as a main source of their Gospels ; "and they are the only other documents bearing on the life of Jesus which have come down to us from the first sixty years after the Crucifixion. . . . In every known Gospel of early times, alike in the great Church and in heretical circles, St. Mark was

used as the leading authority for the history of the Life of Jesus" (Dr. Gore's *Commentary*). St. Matthew was really written by an unknown Jewish Christian of Palestine about the year A.D. 80. "He used, besides Mark and Q (the document of an unknown writer), a collection of proof-texts to show that Christ was the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy. This way of using the Old Testament was in accord with allegorical methods of interpretation common among Jewish Rabbis of the time : we do not deem it satisfactory. In "Matthew" we also find that Church practices, which had grown up during the half-century since Christ's death, were believed to have His authority. The book is well suited for reading at public worship ; and was placed first among the Gospels because it was for long most highly esteemed" (Bishop Barnes).

The Gospel of *St. Luke* was written about the year A.D. 85 by Luke 'the beloved physician' and companion of St. Paul. "The author was an educated man of literary habits and his compositions betray two influences—the influence of current Hellenistic style and the influence of the Greek Bible" (Dr. Gore's *Commentary*).

The fourth Gospel, *St. John*, "remains an enigma : its authorship and its historical value are fiercely disputed. It is not a biography so much as a spiritual interpretation of the life of Christ. It stands in somewhat the same relation

to the other Gospels as does Plato's *Apology* to a life of Socrates " (Bishop Barnes).

I may now resume the story of my quest of 'modernism.'

What is a Miracle?

I can frankly say that the subject of miracles has never been a burning question for me. It has never profoundly interested me. This is possibly because I am so constituted mentally that I see "miracles" everywhere in Nature.

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky :
So was it when my life began,
So is it now I am a man,
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die.

This, although it has nothing to do with the conception of miracles in the realm of religion, is at the bottom of my indifference to the kind of miracles that have agitated, and continue to agitate, so many minds. To finite minds Nature is the supreme miracle. The question of the immutability of the "laws" of Nature depends on whether we have exhausted all that is to be known about these laws ; and whether the Maker of them intended that they would for ever remain immutable. But, perhaps, this is to beg the question.

What is a miracle? According to our latest

dictionary—The Oxford Dictionary—a miracle is “A marvellous event occurring within human experience, which cannot have been brought about by human power or by the operation of any natural agency, and must therefore be ascribed to the special intervention of the Deity or of some supernatural being ; chiefly, an act (*e.g.*, of healing) exhibiting control over the Laws of Nature, and serving as evidence that the agent is either divine or is specially favoured by God.”

That is a dictionary definition. There is also the conception of a miracle as a vehicle of revelation, an act or event by which “God makes manifest His moral governance in the physical world.”

The subject of miracles in Dr. Hastings' well-known work, *Dictionary of the Bible*, is introduced with the following words :—

“It is a remarkable circumstance that the great stumbling-block at the present day to many persons who are anxious to accept the Christian creeds should be the statement of the very fact which was put forward in the Apostolic Age as the one convincing proof of their truth, viz., the fact of the Resurrection of Christ. The Christian miracles were once an ‘aid to faith’ ; they are now regarded by many as a grave hindrance to the acceptance of Christianity. It is not hard to account for this.

“With the development of physical science,

and with the largely increased knowledge of what we are accustomed to call the laws of Nature, and still more with the growth of the conviction which is at the root of all science that nothing happens abnormally, but that in the physical world every effect has its cause, and that the same causes under the same circumstances will always produce the same effects, men have come to think that there is something about a 'miracle' which no scientifically educated person can believe."

A Stumbling-Block.

The *impossibility* of miracles is avowedly at the bottom of much of the criticism to which the Christian documents have been subjected. The spirit of many men of science is the spirit in which Goethe is quoted as having said, "A voice from heaven would not convince me that water burned or a dead man rose again." We recall that, in another connection, Augustine said : "I should not believe the Gospel if the authority of the Church did not determine me to do so." Are such things, then, as belief in miracles and belief, say, in the infallibility of the Roman Church dependent on one's mental make-up? Of some this is true ; of others it is not.

I have re-read recently Matthew Arnold on the subject of miracles. I have also read some Modernist essays on the same subject. I do not know that the latter have added much to

my knowledge, and I think I like best the broad sweep of Arnold's way of presenting the case. I cannot forbear quoting Arnold here, as applicable :—

“The object of *Literature and Dogma* is to reassure those who feel attachment to Christianity, to the Bible, but who recognise the growing discredit befalling miracles and the supernatural. Such persons are to be reassured, not by disguising or extenuating the discredit which has befallen miracles and the supernatural, but by insisting on the natural truth of Christianity. That miracles have fallen into discredit is to be frankly admitted. . . . It has become even yet more manifest that by the sanction of miracles Christianity can no longer stand ; it can stand only by its natural truth.”

Why do I quote a thing written in 1889 ? Because the same things continue to be written to-day and by prominent Churchmen ; because those things continue to-day also to be denied by other prominent Churchmen.

A Case in Point.

Dr. Lionel Ford, the Dean of York, says that “the Gospel and Modernism are really two different religions.” The book to which Dr. Ford contributes an introduction is by the Rev. A. E. Baker (*The Gospel and Modernism*). Shortly summarised, the argument is like this :—

‘The Christian faith is founded on historical facts : the Virgin Birth, the physical Resurrection, the institution of the Church and Sacraments, the divinity of Christ, Redemption. If the Church’s account of these facts is not true, then Christianity is not true. If Modernists reject these things they do not hold the faith which Christians have held. Christianity must be bound up with, depend upon history, upon facts. All—prayer, miracle, salvation, the Sacraments, the Church—all stands or falls with the Incarnation, a unique event on the field of time and history. If it happened, Christianity is true. If it did not happen, Christianity is false.’

Note Mr. Baker’s insistence on historical facts: Note that he admits that the historical foundation for each one of his beliefs must be examined on its merits “and by the most exact critical methods.” Note that he is satisfied that the facts he enumerates *are* facts. *Then read this strange admission :* “To say that Christianity rests upon history is to say that its foundations can never be quite certain, they can never be more than probable. In theory, they are always liable to be overturned by some new discovery, some ultra-modern scholar or historian.”

So, Mr. Baker says, when a man has “laboured to make himself competent to form an opinion” and convince himself that there *is* evidence for the Virgin Birth and for the Empty Tomb, he will

accept and exercise a faith that is "fundamentally reasonable." But "everything comes back to one question: Was Jesus Incarnate God?" Here once more we come up against our elusive author, for he tells us that it is impossible to be definite "about what we mean by Incarnation." The direct evidence of the Incarnation, he says, is the immediate revelation of God and Man. And, adds Mr. Baker, "the experience of humanity has confirmed that direct revelation." *A revelation that fits Mr. Baker's particular conception of the Christian religion.* If you differ in your conclusions about supposed historical happenings from the strict Anglo-Catholic beliefs of Mr. Baker, you are no Christian. And, in that case, you do not belong to "humanity," you are negligible.

The same argument that is applied to the fundamental importance of the Incarnation is applied to the Miracles, to the Atonement, to the Sacraments. You must accept the "historical" facts as literal facts or you are no Christian. But the strange part of it is that we are told that it is incumbent on us to be diligent in searching out facts of history and the facts of science for *ourselves*. If in the result you are led to Modernist ways of thinking, you are no Christian, for Christianity "is indissolubly connected with certain unique historical events." Which, as we saw, the Dean of St. Paul's says *it is not*.

The Dilemma.

I have said that the same things are being said by prominent Churchmen to-day (and denied by others) that Matthew Arnold said about miracles forty years ago. I am speaking in a perfectly detached way, for, as I have said, the question of miracles has never been a *sine qua non* to me. I can respect those who feel constrained to believe. That Matthew Arnold said "Miracles do not happen" proves nothing in itself. The arguments he used, however, have been perhaps strengthened in recent years and in various directions. When I read what "orthodox" writers of to-day say on the subject of miracles, I am struck with the resemblance to the ingenious methods of Mr. Gladstone. To take one example (from Dr. Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*): "On the whole, then, while we maintain that the history of the Jews cannot be truly interpreted unless the special intervention of Providence . . . be discerned, and while we distinctly recognise the miraculous nature of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, and are not slow to accept the allegation that *miracles* may have accompanied their progress, we cannot think that the evidence *for several recorded miracles* . . . is sufficient to compel implicit credence in their literal truth."

If miracles are a matter of "evidence" what is the nature of the evidence that determines which

miracles are to be believed in the Old as in the New Testament, and which are not? I agree with another writer who has said : " To pick Scripture miracles one by one to pieces is an odious and repulsive task ; it is also an unprofitable one, for whatever we may think of the affirmative demonstrations of them, a negative demonstration of them is, from the circumstances of the case, impossible. And yet the human mind is assuredly passing away, however slowly, from this hold of reliance also ; and those who make it their stay . . . will more and more feel themselves disturbed, shaken, distressed and bewildered. . . . Whether we attack them, or whether we defend them, does not much matter. The human mind, as its experience widens, is turning away from them." And yet the human mind seems to crave for miracles. Cardinal Newman visited Naples "and came back a believer in the liquefaction of the Saint's blood. He accepted the most absurd 'miracles.' "

There will always remain to devout minds, even though they may not accept miracles as facts, the "symbolic expression of an invisible spiritual principle." As Canon Streeter says : "If a multitude is fed with loaves and fishes, this is not a mere event which once happened by the Lake of Galilee ; it is also symbolically the expression in time of the eternal verity that man attains to the Life Divine by feeding

spiritually upon Christ the Bread of Life." And so with the symbolic significance of other "miracles." But that is another story.

Canon Streeter's View.

Canon Streeter says : " So far as the broad facts are concerned I think one must affirm that John recorded nothing which he did not believe to be historical. It does not follow that his belief was always justified. He records four stupendous miracles—the Feeding of the Five Thousand, the Walking on the Water, the Changing of Water into Wine, and the Raising of Lazarus. The difficulty of the modern mind of supposing that such events happened exactly and in all particulars as they are described by the Evangelist is a point that needs no elaboration."

He continues : " To sum up, John may have been mistaken about his facts, but to him it is as important to emphasise the historical as to see in the historical a symbol of the Eternal. But John was interested in these stories, not so much because they were marvellous, as because they seemed to him to embody eternal truth. To him fact and meaning are related as flesh and spirit. . . . The familiar observation that in John the miracles are 'acted parables' is absolutely correct ; only it does not go far enough. To John the whole of the appearance in history of the Word made Flesh

is an acted parable—including the Death and Resurrection.”

If any reader desires to be acquainted with Canon Streeter's views on the greatest of miracles he should read his essay on “The Historic Christ,” in the volume, *Foundations* (Macmillan and Co., Ltd.). I cannot summarise it in the space at my disposal. It is an exposition of the new faith, with which the orthodox will not agree.

I take the following quotation, however, from *The Way of Modernism* by Dr. Bethune-Baker, Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, who writes somewhat on the lines of Canon Streeter : “Just as in regard to some of the stories of the Old Testament we have to make the ‘evolutionary’ character of all that we call ‘Revelation’ plain before we can use them for any religious purpose to-day, or draw from them any moral truths, so in regard to many of the stories of the New Testament we have to take into account the mentality of the people from whom they come before we can draw from them the real character of the history which they narrate, and so their religious purport for us.”

Plain Words.

I have referred to “a conspiracy of silence” on the part of professors to students and preachers towards their audiences. This is not a complaint we can make to-day of the modernist Divinity

professors. I may quote Dr. Bethune-Baker as an instance :—

“ That Jesus was a great Faith-Healer is of course certain ; but in my judgment, all attempts to discriminate between the other narratives of so-called ‘ miracles ’ are as idle as are attempts to bolster them up by anything that modern science has revealed or is likely to reveal.

“ I am sure the time has come when they ought no more to be treated as true accounts of actual occurrences than we now treat the stories Jesus told to picture out his moral and spiritual teaching. . . . I would use miracles for the permanent religious value of the narratives. I would use them, and have them used for no other purpose.”

But the older school will have none of this. I am not impressed, personally, by the view that there has existed belief in miracles in all ages, neither do I think there is any truth in the claim of Dr. J. R. Illingworth that “ it is impossible to reconstruct past history by the standard of our own age.” Neither is it the final word when he says the Apostles “ believed miracles to have happened within their own personal experience, and this belief has been considered true by every generation of Christians, and consequently incorporated in the creed of the Church.”

In reality, does it not all come to this : All such questions as miracles, inspiration and reve-

lation, are like systems of philosophy ; you may believe or you may not ; it depends on the views you take of the universe ; philosophies have been constructed which no man can verify and no man can refute ; whatever interpretation is made we may take it it is coloured by the particular mental bias of the individual. I may not believe miracles happen, but I do believe that more miraculous things lie in the unfathomed secrets of the universe than we even suspect ; agencies whose activities we are not yet aware of. *And that view is supported by science.* It is as true to-day as it was fifty years ago when Froude wrote : " We can produce no reason from the nature of things, for we do not know what the nature of things is." But all that is no argument for miracles in the strict sense. A happening that is not understood is not on that account a miracle ; the word is simply a metaphor.

THE MODERNIST VIEW

I quote the following passage as a fair statement of the position of a Modernist to-day : " There is some teaching of Christ in the Gospels which dates itself ; it is of a particular era and locality ; but there is much of the widest significance and of a religious insight which is supremely attractive. It is this teaching which men and women in large numbers are blending for them-

selves with the modern scientific outlook. One can thus see religion in the making in the public mind. Because the pulpits too seldom supply constructive ideas, the churches remain half empty. Similarly traditional creeds and theological statements are largely ignored. What will emerge from the melting-pot no man can prophesy. . . . England seems to be shaping anew its religious convictions. The work is being done less by professional ecclesiastics than by a few scholars. They combine with men of science, social reformers, and serious journalists to give us a new understanding of the teaching of Jesus.

“The outcome of this movement will be of vital importance. The Spirit of God is not confined to ancient institutions, and the prophet whom God inspires has usually been a layman and not a priest. Moreover, men can do great things under the stimulus of a religion which they forge for themselves.”

One other quotation, from another source :—

“A new type of Anglican is emerging whose theology and outlook are frankly modernist, and whose influence is already very great, and will in the next ten years be dominant. Moreover, those who fear that modernism will never be anything but negative are confuted by the facts. Modernists have had inevitably to pass through a period of

questioning and uncertainty, when established traditions were challenged and old founts of belief reshaped. That period is over.

“The conflict between science and religion, which has for so long tormented the souls of honest churchmen, is within sight of its end. Biologists, psychologists, and philosophers are beginning to reach an agreed interpretation of the universe—an interpretation compatible with, indeed demanding, a theistic and Christian faith. Similarly, Christian scholars in their exposition of Jesus Christ are discovering not only a new and clear knowledge, but an astonishing measure of agreement, and they find that Christ, thus understood, illuminates and is illuminated by the scientific study of nature. A synthetic theology and knowledge of God, commensurate with the best learning of to-day, is now being formulated, and will usher in a widespread revival of religion. Modernists, if they are true to their principles, willing to learn, and positive rather than negative in their teaching, have by far the largest contribution to make as their movement spreads.”

One other point. Did the Founder of Christianity implicitly sanction the establishment of an institution such as the Catholic Church has been? I let a modernist answer the question: “Orthodox Catholicism maintains that He did. Modernism admits that He did not.”

The Myth Theory.

One question may, I think, be dismissed. That Jesus ever lived is a question that has been debated. I should think that the question does not admit of debate. No scholar of the first rank now doubts the reliability of His historicity. Apart from the debatable questions of miraculous birth, resurrection and ascension, a historic Jesus lived and taught. He may not have left one written line, there may be an absence of contemporary reference to Him. Socrates wrote no books, and we only know his teachings from his disciples. The narratives of the disciples of Jesus were being read a few decades after His death. And was the person Jesus, *known to the Rabbis and execrated in the synagogue*, a myth? A sun-god? The documents that certify to His actual life, his acts and teachings, have been treated as ordinary human documents by scholars and critics, and as Mr. H. G. Wells has written : "In spite of miraculous and incredible additions, one is obliged to say, 'Here was a man.' This part of the tale could not have been invented."

The question does not seem to be entirely dead, although one would have thought so. In a recent number of that advanced review, *The Modern Churchman*, the editor, Dr. H. D. Major, commenting on the fifteenth Conference of Modern Churchmen, at which the subject of discussion was Christianity and History, writes:—

“Behind the papers and discussions of the Conference there lurked in the minds of some who have faith in the spirit and methods of modern historical research as applied to the Scriptures, but who do not know enough to be able to judge of what may be regarded as its assured results, this question : Can we still believe in Jesus Christ as an historical person ? Is the *Christus-myth* school, of which we heard a good deal in discussion, really justified in claiming that Jesus Christ was not an historical person, but was ‘only a deity falsely changed into a man by tradition,’ not a being of flesh and blood, but a creation of the religious consciousness of a community of worshippers ?

“Before attempting to indicate the nature of the evidence for Jesus having been an historical person, and where that evidence may be studied by those who are in no sense professed students, I would suggest that all who have doubts as to the historical existence of Jesus Christ should face and answer this question : What difference would it make or should it make, to my religion and mode of life, if it were proved that Jesus Christ is a mythical and not an historical person ?”

Dr. Major, in the same number of this review, contributes an interesting article on “Is Jesus an Historical Person ?” It is short, and I take the liberty of reproducing it.

Can we believe that there was a Jesus of History, or was He a myth? This question has been discussed on and off for the last one hundred and forty years in France, Germany, England, and America. There was a notable controversy on this point in Germany and England in the first two decades of this century. It raised its head in England with J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*, published in 1900, and received its *coup de grâce* from F. C. Conybeare's *The Historical Christ* (an investigation of the views of Mr. J. M. Robertson, Dr. A. Drews, and Prof. W. B. Smith), published by the Rationalist Press in 1914.

In Germany it began with Kalthoff in 1903, and Maurenbrecher, Kautsky, Jensen, W. B. Smith, Drews, Stendel, Lublinski, W. Schultz, and others contributed volumes to it in favour of the mythological view, while Holtzmann, Wernle, von Soden, Julicher, Weinel, J. Weiss, and a number of other scholars contributed volumes in favour of the historical view. I mention these names to indicate the magnitude of the subject and the interest it aroused. It is a matter with which Christian teachers should be acquainted, for the mythological view was put forward with a great display of erudition, notably in certain cases by leaders of the social-democratic movement, and it has become popular with many educated men of the artisan class, and although, as we hold, the contentions of the mythologists were conclusively answered, the answers are not known in circles where the mythological volumes were read or possibly extracts from them cited.

The Myth Theory Ridiculous.

It will seem amazing to plain people, when we have a whole literature like our Four Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament, which assume as absolutely certain the existence of the historic Jesus and tell us a great deal about Him, that any one can doubt that He was an historic personage. . . . It seems almost equally significant that while the Jews, who were the bitterest opponents of the Christian Church, contradicted

many things the Christians taught about Jesus—denying His virgin birth, His sinlessness, the resurrection of His body, etc.—they never denied His being an historic person.

It is the weakness of non-Christian evidence to the existence of Jesus which has lent strength to the mythological theory. On several occasions at the Girton Conference reference was made to the testimony of Josephus. Josephus was born of a high-priestly family in Jerusalem in 38 A.D. He witnessed the awful carnage of the Roman-Jewish war, when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. He was intensely interested in Judaism; he was a profound student of it; and he was also one of the great historians of antiquity. He wrote the Jewish history of his own times, yet it is very doubtful if he ever refers in his writings to Jesus.* Renan believed that he did, but it is thought by many that the passages have been interpolated. The first undoubted non-Christian testimony to Jesus is by Tacitus, who lived about 52 A.D. to 120 A.D. He was the great historian of Imperial Rome. He writes in his *Annals* XV., iv, 4 :—

“The author of this name (Christian) Christus was executed in the reign of Tiberius by the Procurator Pontius Pilate, and the detested superstition, suppressed for a time, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, where the evil originated, but even through Rome.”

Suetonius, a Roman historian, born about 70 A.D., and Pliny the Younger, born in 61 A.D., a Roman Governor, also refer to Christ. Certainly the evidence is slight, but Jesus of Nazareth in the eye of Roman imperial historians was a very insignificant person in that great empire of a hundred million souls.

* I would add this to Dr. Major's comment : Three great authorities now acknowledge the genuineness of the famous passage concerning Jesus in the *Antiquities* of Josephus. They are Harnack, Professor Burkitt and Professor Emery Barnes. In *The New Testament in the Twentieth Century*, Maurice Jones says, “This passage, which had for centuries been almost universally regarded as a Christian interpolation, is now regarded as genuine, and this cuts at the very roots of the ‘Christ-Myth’ theory, and disposes completely of the vagaries of Drews and J. M. Robertson.”

It is among Christian writers that we get the most inspiring evidence. All critics accept St. Paul's epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians as genuine. In 1 Corinthians ix. 5, he speaks of "the brethren of the Lord," and in Galatians i. 19, he refers to "James, the brother of the Lord." He does it in such a way as to indicate that they were persons who were very well known to his readers. The descendants of these "brethren of the Lord," according to the great Church historian, Eusebius, the friend of Constantine the Great, survived for several generations in a humble condition. It is impossible to account for these brethren of Jesus if He Himself were not a human being.

Those who wish to read the argument against the mythological school can find it accurately and justly presented in four books in the English tongue: the first two by Englishmen, the third by an American, the fourth by a German. (1) *The Historic Christ*, by F. C. Conybeare (Watts & Co., 1914); (2) *Jesus the Christ: Historical or Mythical?* by T. J. Thorburn (T. and T. Clark, 1912); (3) *The Historicity of Jesus*, by S. J. Case (University of Chicago Press, 1912); (4) *What is the Truth About Jesus Christ?* by Friedrich Loofs (T. and T. Clark, 1913). . . . We may dismiss the mythological Jesus theory with the remark that it seems as grotesque to the scholarly student of the New Testament as Anglo-Israelism does to the critical scholar of the Old Testament.

VII

FROM JUDAISM TO CHRISTIANITY

THE vast number of modern critical books dealing with the New Testament writings almost appeals to one's sense of humour. Anything that wants so much explaining will never be explained. We are, indeed, indebted to the work of many scholars for throwing so much light on

what needed clearing up. Of certain other critics we imagine they *tirelessly look for something that is not there*. Just as many a one has told Shakespeare things about Hamlet that Shakespeare never knew ; just as others have drawn a Napoleon that would be a revelation to Napoleon himself, and just as others, again, have set up their own image of Oliver Cromwell, so has the Man of Nazareth been dealt with—He has been dressed to suit a period ; He has been stripped to allay a passion ; He has been distorted to please a prejudice ; mythologised to fit a theory.

For, the Son of Man, of the seed of David, is an historical product of religious evolution. Go back to the man Moses, or the Mosaist, who led a handtul of humble people out of the land of Egypt some three thousand, or more, years ago. Wandering with their flocks and herds over the Arabian desert, slowly drifting on to their final home in Palestine. We watch them mix with a more civilised people ; we see them fight their way until they finally become a nation, a nation of a mixed people, but still the Hebrew nation. Their rulers or " Judges " give way to Kings—Saul, David and Solomon. The religion of these wandering herdsmen is pagan ; gathering and settling into towns, their religion is pagan ; under the Patriarchs, Judges and Kings the religion is still pagan—purely pagan at first, then developing to a conception of Jahveh

as the particular god of the tribe of Israel ; one god among many, distinguished from the gods of the surrounding nations, gods to whom a Hebrew might transfer his allegiance if he happened to make his home with another tribe.

“ The religion of Israel was closely bound up with the worship of the High Places. Jahveh was worshipped as a kind of local Baal, the lord or owner of the sacred spot dedicated to him. There were various symbols of his sovereignty. The commonest was a stone pillar, sometimes a rude, unshaped block called ‘ Massebah.’ ” (Mr. W. L. Courtney.)

The priests were often corrupt. “ Isaiah draws for us a terrible picture of a drunken priesthood, just as Hosea gives us a still more terrible recital of the murdering gangs of priests in Shechem or Gilead, who lay in wait for the pilgrims. No foreign cultus, no debased priesthood, but a return to the simplicity of nomad times and the worship of Jahveh—these were the chief notes of the prophetic utterance. And, throughout, morality, the morality of ordinary life, was proclaimed as the only real proof of a true religion.

“ When, however, the northern kingdom and Judah were both threatened by the vast empires on either side of them, Assyria on the east, Egypt on the south-west, to say nothing of Syria, the notion of a tribal god was in peculiar

danger. According to the usages of the time, if the tribe or the nation was overwhelmed by a foreign nation, its own god was overwhelmed by the god belonging to the conquerors. If Israel and Judah were defeated by the armies of Sargon and Sennacherib, their god also was held to suffer a like conquest. How did the prophets meet this problem? Amos, whose activity was in the northern kingdom, solved the difficulty by the assertion that Jahveh was more than local and national, that his sovereignty was an universal sovereignty. It was not only the fact that Jahveh had brought the Israelites out of Egypt, but he was also the Lord of the Universe, the Deity who made the great lights of Heaven, the God of the whole world. Inasmuch as Jahveh was a righteous ruler, he claimed from men that they too should be righteous, and a merely ceremonial worship that ignored the claims of morality was absolutely valueless."

But in the course of two centuries the conception of Jahveh became transformed into a righteous and all-powerful God. But still the Jahveh of Israel only, of the kingdom of Israel. The conception develops still further.

Isaiah, Ezekiel and the later Prophets have enlarged visions—"O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not

afraid ; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God ! Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him : behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.' At first, Jehovah, the national God, was to succour and sustain them, but a hundred years rolled on and Jerusalem was destroyed ; the Hebrew nation was no more. The temple of Israel, the Prophets now proclaimed, was the temple of the heart ; yet would Jehovah bring back His people to His land and theirs. An ideal Jewish state was still the dream ; a revival and a continuance of national life was predicted. The Messiah foretold was to be a human King, of the stock of David, a King politically, military and judicial. The prophecies, up to this time, are not figurative, they are prophecies of *literal* happenings.

Another Phase.

After the Exile there came another phase. The Hebrew nation had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean King, in the year B.C. 586, the people carried away to exile in Babylonia. Later, Cyrus, the King of Persia, who " had risen like the flash of a meteor in the eastern sky," conquered Babylon (B.C. 539). The Hebrew exiles looked upon him as their deliverer ; they had now a Persian ruler. Such exiles as cared to were allowed to return to their

native land. Some preferred to remain in Babylonia, but others went back to Jerusalem and rebuilt the city on a modest scale and restored the Temple. A century later Ezra joined this Priestly community and brought with him a renovated law, the work of Babylonian Jews. This was in B.C. 444. The returned Hebrew leaders now established and published the religious laws which have ever since been revered by the Jews. This organised religion we now call Judaism, the religion of the Jews. "Under it the old Hebrew Kingship was not revived. In its place a High Priest at Jerusalem became the ruler of the Jews. The Jewish State was thus a *religious* organisation, a church with a priest at its head." It was at this time the separate Hebrew books were put together and became (what is now) the Old Testament.*

The Law Kills Prophecy.

The prophets had died away. The age of the prophets gave place to the law. We have now the Priestly code. It is now that the essential lines of the religious and moral practice of the Jews for after-time is determined—"an artificial Israel, a congregation rather than a state, inspired by the ideal of Levitical holiness, gathered under the presidency of the high priest around the temple-worship of Jerusalem." Judaism now

* See *The Bible in the Light of To-day.*

became the religion of a sacred book. The law killed prophecy.

Now, this had a remarkable sequel in Jewish history, splitting up Jewish thought into two separate streams. Canon Charles says : " Owing to the efforts of Ezra and his spiritual successors the Law came to be regarded as the complete and last word of God to man. When this view of the law became dominant it is obvious that no man, however keenly he felt himself to be the bearer of a divine message to his countrymen, could expect a hearing." What then, happened ?

Scholars used to speak of the interval between the Old Testament and the New Testament as the " Years of Silence." It is only within recent years that Biblical scholars have discovered that there were no such years of silence. A vast literature, called the Apocalyptic writings, has been discovered. This series of writings or books was the work of anonymous writers, anonymous because of the reason I have stated. The law had shut the mouth of the prophets.

We shall see presently how Jewish thought came to diverge into two distinct streams. There was the legal teaching based upon the application of the Mosaic Law ; the type of teaching that at a later date was embodied in the Talmud, the authorised form of Judaism ; on the other hand there was the rise of the mystic apocalyptic writers with other conceptions than the Law,

conceptions which gave a new turn to religious views and which transformed the doctrine of the Kingdom.

We are dealing now with a period of religious development between the Old and the New Testaments. It was the period of Apocalyptic literature. A literature, or series of books by unknown writers, written under assumed names which are always *the names of various ancient worthies in Israel* (such as Ezra, Baruch, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Moses, Enoch, etc.).

Canon Charles writes : " This literature was written probably for the most part in Galilee, the home of the religious seer and mystic. Not only was the development of a religious but also of an ethical character. In both these respects the way was prepared by this literature for the advent of Christianity, while a study of the New Testament makes it clear that its writers had been brought up in the atmosphere created by these books and were themselves directly acquainted with many of them. Owing to these religious thinkers and visionaries the hopeless outlook of the faithful individual in the Old Testament was transformed into one of joy. The expectation of the Old Testament saint was an everlasting existence in the unblessed abode of Sheol or Hades. This expectation was transformed by this school of writers into the hope of a blessed immortality."

VIII

'THE YEARS OF SILENCE'

WE are, then, almost at the eve of the foundation of Christianity : the age of the Apocalyptic writers. This is important ; on this hinges controversy.

It is here the *historical* and the *theological* points of view regarding Christ come into conflict. To simplify the story I shall not go into detailed reference to what is called the *Apocalyptic Eschatology* prevalent at the time preceding the birth of Christ. The promise or the idea of a national Messiah now disappears or partly disappears. The term *Apocalyptic* is given to a type of literature on account of its peculiar *form*, that is, revelation through visions expressed in a particular kind of symbolism. (The *Book of Revelation* is an example.) *Eschatology* is a name which more properly attaches to the *matter* of the literature—the description of the “Last Things,” the end of the present world-order.

This apocalyptic literature, writes Professor de Burgh, “ essayed a philosophy of religion and of history, seeking to penetrate behind events to their divine purpose, and embracing past, present, and future in a single supernatural scheme, culminating in the advent of the divine kingdom, the last judgment, and the resurrection of the righteous to a blessed future life. It showed

Millenarianism is the product of Jewish apocalyptic. It furnished an imaginative outlet for the patriotic spirit among the Jews, who were too weak to realise their national aspirations in action. . . . The importance of Jewish apocalyptic for an understanding of the religious environment under which Christianity appeared is very great, and its influence on Christian eschatology proved deep and lasting ; e.g., the conceptions of the final judgment, of heaven, and of everlasting punishment have their source in apocalyptic literature."

Another writer remarks : "The eschatological question, if not the most difficult and disturbing, is at any rate the most living issue in New Testament criticism and at the present time attracts more general interest than any other subject connected with Biblical studies."

Describing it, Canon Streeter says, "The vivid directness of the ancient prophet is replaced by a complicated symbolism, to our modern taste fantastic and bizarre. . . . Unheard of tribulations, angelic and demonic conflicts lead up to catastrophes shaking earth and heaven. The dead shall rise to judgment, and the righteous people of God, both those newly risen and those who had not experienced death, in bodies glorified and transformed shall enter into a life of blessedness in a New Jerusalem on a renovated earth."

I have found no more lucid description of this

period than that of Professor de Burgh in *The Legacy of the Ancient World*. The doctrine of the Kingdom was transformed in a striking manner in the two centuries before Christ. Up to this time but few of the Jewish people had a belief in resurrection. The traditional view of the soul for the Hebrews as for other races was crude and associated with the cult of ancestors, and devoid of ethical significance. "There is here no question of personal immortality or of moral retribution after death. . . . We have seen how thinkers like the author of Job struggled vainly to find an answer to the problem. It was the stress of persecution under Antiochus that forced the belief in resurrection upon the mind of the Jewish people. It had been confined to a small minority, influenced possibly by contact with Zoroastrian ideas. The passages in the Old Testament that allude to it are few and late."

To the apocalyptist the position of the Jews is hopeless. "He finds neither freedom nor glory in this life or upon this earth. The main object of these writers was to console the godly in their oppression and to strengthen their faith in the righteousness of God."

As the first century (B.C.) drew on, a further and far-reaching development made its appearance. "The conviction grew that this earth was unworthy to be the scene of the consummation of the Kingdom, that a 1the coming of the Messiah,

or at the close of his earthly reign, Jehovah would create a new heaven and a new earth, and that after a final judgment, the soul of the righteous Israelite would pass to an eternal life in the heavenly Kingdom." *

This kind of Apocalyptic literature was abundant just prior to the time of Christ. Much of this literature is recent discovery. Canon Streeter tells us that its recovery and historical interpretation has been one of the greatest achievements of modern Biblical scholarship. Many of these Apocalyptic writers make no mention of the Messiah. The hope of the restoration of Israel by direct Divine intervention did not need the ideal King dreamed of by the earlier prophets. But, as Streeter says, the fact that inspired prophets had foretold such a personal deliverer, a King, could not be ignored. We have recorded a vision of 'one like unto a Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven.' In Enoch this 'Son of Man' "is interpreted as a supernatural being, who with his Angels shall confound the Kings of the earth, sit on the throne of God, judge the world, and in general be God's agent in introducing the new era of the Apocalyptic hope."

As Streeter reminds us, all this is of much importance : "This conception of the Messiah

* "Nowhere in the Jewish writings of the first century B.C., or the first century A.D., is any trace discoverable of the admission of the Gentiles to the Kingdom."

as Son of Man, that is, as a pre-existent supernatural being, destined to be manifested at the close of history to usher in the new era, is by far the most important if we are to understand the general outlook of the original disciples and of the writers of the New Testament. But it did not displace either the name or the conception of the ideal Son of David."

We have now a new conception of the Kingdom of God. "The main object is clear. The great prophets of Israel had prophesied the glorious future of the chosen people of God, and yet the Jew was everywhere trampled underfoot. Hence, to console the Jew for his present distress, a picture was revealed of future greatness, of the dawn of a new earth and a new heaven, while *a definite idea of immortality* which had been wanting in the earlier Hebraic literature was slowly evolved."

The Apocalyptic Writings.

The Prophets, as we saw, had all died away. "The claim of John the Baptist to prophetic inspiration," says Canon Streeter, "broke the silence which had lasted for more than three hundred years." As I have said, it is only in recent years that scholars have discovered this vast Jewish apocalyptic literature previously unknown. From some of these oracles, the Book of Enoch, or the Book of the Secrets of Enoch,

written in Egypt, many obscurities in the New Testament have been mitigated ; many phrases are reproduced practically verbally in the Gospels —“ Blessed are the peacemakers ” ; “ Swear not at all,” etc. These books were known and were quoted from, and some of their ideas borrowed, by New Testament writers. No one, Professor Peake says, can answer the question, “ What Bible was recognised by Jesus and the New Testament writers ? ” What did Jesus read ?

Conflicting Opinions.

We are again up against conflicting opinion. While one scholar regards apocalyptic ideas as “ an evil inheritance which the Christians took over from the Jews ” another regards “ the vast services of apocalyptic not only to Judaism but still more to Christianity are now steadily coming into recognition ” ; another authority (Porter) states “ that prophecy and apocalyptic represent two contrasted conceptions of the nature of revelation, two ideas of the supernatural, two estimates of the present life, two theologies, almost two religions.”

Not for the first time as a humble layman I am ‘ in wandering mazes lost.’ Almost I am persuaded to . . .

One thing is clear enough, Christianity did not leap full grown into life at the beginning of the Christian era, ‘ unbeholden ’ to the so-called

years of silence. "Such an idea has been rudely shattered by the research of recent years."

The Environment of Jesus.

At one time it was the fashion to portray an *ecclesiastical* Jesus as distinct from the *historical* Jesus. But "the figure of Jesus cannot be abstracted from the social and economic environment of his time. He was born within an era saturated with certain conceptions, limited in certain respects to very definite views, full of a vague yearning for some ideal conclusion or apotheosis of the Jewish people. And here we come across one of the main features with which much more modern criticism occupies itself ; it seeks to study the environment and interprets Christology in the light of Jewish Apocalyptic literature." The literature which I have described ; "it would seem that such books as these formed the mental pabulum of the Pharisaic Jews of Palestine." *

Summing up the question of the ecclesiastical Jesus as against the historical Jesus, Mr. W. L. Courtney says, "We are able to see that the attempted effort to find a historical Jesus, as the Liberal school of theology desired to do, is doomed to failure, because Jesus cannot be divorced from his environment and is, in a sense, part and parcel of it. Eschatology, or the doctrine of the last and

* *Literary Man's New Testament* : Courtney.

final things, must have played a large portion not only in the ordinary conceptions of the world around him, but also in his own mind. Some critics have held that the work recently referred to, the *Similitudes of Enoch*, dated about 64 B.C., was well known to Jesus ; it is also quoted in the Epistle of Jude. It is impossible to doubt that Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah, however much he may have reprobated the more vulgar interpretation of 'warrior prince.' He believed also that it was his office to judge the world, to inaugurate the coming Kingdom, and before Caiaphas at all events he made public confession of his faith. But in this matter his procedure was different in dealing with the public generally and with his own disciples. Even in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem he accepts the homage of the crowd, but makes no definite statement of his Messiahship, and his tolerably constant use of the phrase 'Son of Man' rarely gives any hint of its real meaning. With his disciples he adopts a more intimate method. Gradually and progressively he makes them understand his spiritual claim, partly through parables, as, for instance, the Sower and the Tares, partly by reference to the visions of Daniel. Finally we get the notable confession of Peter at Cæsarea Philippi, and from this point onwards stress is laid on qualities of Messiahship which clearly did not at first recommend themselves to the disciples,

and consoles them with the promise of his speedy reappearance in the glory of the Father with all the holy angels. The Christology involved might not be quite so complete as Paul afterwards made it, but it was clearly conceived by Peter and James and John, as we see in the earlier chapters of the Acts ; nor can we find any real dissociation of the personality of Jesus from the broad apocalyptic conceptions prevalent in the age."

We may take it this is the view of modern Biblical scholars. No less interesting is the study of what happened after Jesus had passed away.

A Vast Literature.

Here again is a vast literature, showing again that nothing is clear. When I say nothing I mean any one definite body of doctrine that is accepted by all who subscribe to the Christian religion. You might form a separate library from books that have been written on each individual aspect of the New Testament. A separate library of the books on the general character of the New Testament ; on Christology ; on special theories or controversies ; on " Pauline theology " ; on the " Christ-Myth " ; on " The Christ of Eschatology " ; on " St. Paul and the Mystery Religions " ; on " The Synoptic Gospels " ; on " The Apostles " ; on " The Johannine Writings " ; and so forth. Have we not,

indeed, the most voluminous Biblical Encyclopædias ?

We have finished with Judaism. The Jews rejected Christ. Judaism and Christianity went their several ways. On which side would Isaiah be, were he alive, or Ezekiel ?

IX

THE HISTORICAL JESUS

DID Christ then claim to be the Messiah, and, if so, in what sense ? He claimed to be the Messiah, certainly. You have but to recall the scene. Jesus before the High Priest, the elders and the scribes ; deserted by his disciples, mocked and taunted, alone, his doom upon him, silent, wearily refusing an answer to his accusers. 'Answerest thou nothing ?' said the High Priest ; but 'He held His peace and answered nothing.' Again the High Priest asked Him and said unto Him, 'Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed ?'

'I am : and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.'

A few hours later, hanging on the Cross, He uttered the cry, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?' And after nineteen centuries the end that He proclaimed so near

has not yet come. Says Canon Streeter, "There is matter for reflection here."

The problems involved in the life and death and teaching of Christ have been matter for reflection, endless discussion, and controversy, for nineteen hundred years. There is nothing to add ; for there is no finality. Interpretation will go on ; the modern interpretation of the advanced wing of the "Modern Churchman" movement makes a great and growing impression on many minds. *The last twenty or thirty years have witnessed a change as marked in Theology as in Science.* It will continue.

Many Voices.

It is futile in a few pages to try to summarise. If, for yourself, you find it necessary to believe in direct Divine Inspiration and Revelation, in miracles, in the doctrines of Incarnation and Redemption, well and good. If *another* interprets inspiration and revelation simply as a thing of religious insight or spiritual experience, an intuitive insight born of "heaven-sent moments," that has inspired men in all ages and in divers ways, he will listen to *you* with a stony inattention. If, for you, the doctrines of Incarnation and Redemption are still the literal facts the old theology taught, well and good. If *another* person interprets incarnation in an evolutionary sense, in the light that "He was also new, an



[Alinari.]

THE CONDEMNATION OF JESUS

“Pilate answered and said, What will ye then that I shall do unto Him Whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify Him.”

(After the painting by Antonio Ciseri.)

emergence of a new consciousness and new quality, a new type as it were of manhood, a new specialisation," he may argue with you, but he is more likely to ignore you.

One person may say, "I believe in the truth of the Resurrection as a physical fact." Another has the equal right to say, "Not at all; the Resurrection was a great act of faith rather than the result of what we might call the evidence of the senses." The two will never agree.

If *you* say you are satisfied that St. Paul's theology cannot be divorced from essential Christianity, that St. Paul's teaching is derived from Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that St. Paul's theology is not parallel with, and is not indebted to the Eastern mystery-religions in essential elements, *another* person may say 'I am not convinced of any of these things'; he might say, 'I cannot find St. Paul's theology in the teaching of Christ. I cannot say how much of his theology is based on the mystery-religions, or how much is distinctly his own. The parallel is admitted by all scholars. If, then, I am to believe like you I must believe with a child-like faith; for it is a fact that the greatest Christian scholars hold different and entirely opposite views on all these matters. If learned theologians take opposite views, the only refuge of the poor layman is to back his fancy.'

If you believe that the Church of England

Creeds, or the Roman Catholic Creeds, are the standards by which religion stands or falls, good and well ; *another* person who will have none of it, may argue with you, but he is more likely to say, " Very well ; your view of the nature of the universe is not the same as mine." One person may find his consolation in his firm belief that Christianity in its creeds is a static faith, and no one will deny his right to this personal belief. But, *some other person* who thinks of religion as something living and growing and which springs up fresh in the hearts of every new generation, like the evolving religion of the Hebrew people, will reply to the static dogmas, " You are stupid." No dogma, unless its meaning is fluid instead of stereotyped, can express the faith for all time. " A dogma is no longer something to be merely attacked or defended ; it is seen to be the form given in the past to a certain belief, and a form which, therefore, is not necessarily final or perfect."

It is an intellectual effort to discover the precise nature of supposed truths embedded in the ancient creeds. Some of us think of ecclesiastics and Christian theologians as men whose interest in religion is chiefly that of an intellectual pursuit. The late Mr. Clutton-Brock put it bluntly : " Many people of all classes have now a deep distrust of all religion, as if it must imply some kind of dishonesty, moral or intellectual,

as if there must be some motive other than a desire for the truth in all religious belief. A clergyman believes, to put it coarsely, because he would lose his living if he ceased to do so; layman, because he gets some kind of comfort from his beliefs." It is unfair to detach this quotation from its context, so I hasten to add that Mr. Clutton-Brock's argument is that this kind of suspicion is encouraged by much vague talk about religion. It is absurd to contrast religious beliefs with the precise statements of men of science. "One might as well be suspicious of all morality because there is much vague talk about it." I let Mr. Clutton-Brock's statement stand, however; it conveys a live suggestion.

The New Revelation.

I am digressing somewhat. But, may be, the reader may see the way that modernism leads. More commonly than is supposed, the raw crudities of traditional beliefs make up the content of the minds of persons who show the deep distrust of the traditional religion of the Churches, and which is a growing feature of our day.

I have said little about the doctrinal detail with which much of Modernism concerns itself. It deals with large issues. It pictures misunderstandings; old standing misconceptions. It stands out as a new method. It is "a term of evil significance to many religious people."

It fixes attention on the *values* or meanings for conduct of the happenings or facts of history. It seeks to reconcile the traditional system of theology with modern knowledge and thought. It examines the traditional *basis* of the Christian religion. "The faith of the Church might be true, though the historical facts on which it had been believed to rest were other than had been supposed." The philosophy or ideas of the fifth century are not the ideas of to-day. The old philosophy "depended on a view of God which conceived of Him as apart from the world, on a view of the world which conceived of it as apart from God. . . . Such theories have no longer any meaning for us. . . . Every acquisition of knowledge in our time forces us, if we would retain a vital idea of God, to conceive of Him as immanent in the world and in man, needing no intermediary in order to act upon, and in both. Physical science is forcing us to a fresh analysis of the religious idea of creation, which will provide for God's immediate activity in the world of Nature. History is forcing us to a fresh analysis of the idea of revelation which will provide for God's immediate activity in the total spiritual development of human society. Psychology is forcing us to a fresh analysis of the idea of redemption which will provide for God's moral action in the development of the individual soul. Out of this threefold analysis

will issue a new and fruitful realisation of God as operant in the world and in man." That is how the original modernists began to think in France, how they aimed at free historical investigation. The Church of Rome, however, reasserted "in its most relentless form the conception of Religion as mere submission to a closed and rigid system."

Was there Misunderstanding?

The old Revelation was a closed and rigid revelation ; the new Revelation "is the revelation of a way of life, an attitude to life and all its interests and activities." I lay no claim to have studied the views of modernism in all their details. I am speaking broadly, hinting at my own imaginings, such as they are. I do not know whether it is within the mark to say that the modernist thinks the whole conception of Christ's disciples and the writers of the New Testament held *a completely wrong impression of His teaching regarding the Kingdom of Heaven*. Some do.

It is possible they may be right. I shall try to outline (using, at times, their own words) the views of certain eminent Christian thinkers, without naming them.

Christ's doctrine of the Kingdom is a philosophic doctrine ; he preached it, however, not as a theory ; He gave to it a matter-of-fact presentment. Being a matter-of-fact present-

ment, it was not recognised to be what it was. To His followers the Kingdom of Heaven was a fact, but not the same fact that it was to Christ. "The Jews expected a natural deliverer. Use the word Kingdom, and it meant to them something at once material and divine, for they conceived the divine in material terms. God meant to them power, and power to be exercised on their behalf." The Kingdom of Christ did not mean power in that sense. It meant the reign or rule of God. "Thy Kingdom come," that is, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven"; the Kingdom entailed a regeneration of this earth. "The essential idea of the Kingdom is the realisation of the rule of God; wherever evil is being rebuffed and good is triumphing, the Kingdom is, just so far, in the act of being realised."

The following quotation sums it up: "He [Christ], like all men possessed by a great truth, insisted that he was possessed by it. Listen to me, he said, believe me and I will show you this truth. To the Jews that meant, Listen to me for I am your national Messiah. When Christ said I will deliver you with my truth, they thought he meant I will deliver you from the Romans. The more he expressed his spiritual certainty the more they thought he meant a material certainty. And his own apostles, when he said my Kingdom is not of this world, thought he meant that he would exercise a supernatural power and

take them with him to a celestial state of power and bliss. James and John may have rid themselves of the notion that he would reign in the world as it is, that he would be a second and more successful Judas Maccabæus, but only to fall into the belief that he would accomplish a complete and celestial revolution, giving his followers a celestial status in it. That they did misunderstand him thus we have a proof in the doctrine of St. Paul. He thought at first that Christ was coming in a short time to accomplish this celestial revolution. To him the saying that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night means that Christ himself will descend suddenly from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet of God. 'Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.'

Was St. Paul Mistaken?

"St. Paul was mistaken ; and, if Christ meant that by those words, he also was mistaken. The event has proved that. But further, that meaning is inconsistent with his whole teaching and with what he says constantly about the Kingdom of Heaven. There does seem indeed to be this inconsistency in some of his actual reported sayings. Either then he himself was inconsistent or his sayings were misunderstood and misreported. The first supposition seems to me,

and must seem to all Christians, less likely than the last. Indeed, if Christ was guilty of such an inconsistency his whole teaching becomes nonsense. Either he meant by the Kingdom of Heaven what I have taken him to mean or the mass of his most profound teaching means nothing at all.

“So, if there was misunderstanding, it is probable that the misunderstanding arose over ideas unfamiliar to the apostles and contrary to their preconceived ideas. We can, indeed, see in the Gospels themselves signs of such misunderstanding. And where the evangelists report sayings which they themselves evidently do not understand it is fair to assume that those sayings are authentic. They were reported in spite of their unintelligibility because Christ actually said them. And if they are inconsistent with other reported sayings, it is fair to assume that those other sayings have been misreported—have been perverted unconsciously to fit in with the preconceived ideas of those who heard them.

“But the doctrine of St. Paul of an immediate second coming was in accordance with the preconceived religious ideas of the time and with all primitive religious ideas. It is not likely that St. Paul evolved this doctrine by himself or that it was contrary to the beliefs of the other apostles. If it had been, he would have argued about it and referred to their disagreement. He does not ;

he assumes it as the common belief of the Church.

"We may therefore take it to have been the common belief shared by the other apostles ; and there is much evidence that it was so shared. So on this point either the apostles were in error about the doctrine of Christ, or Christ himself had taught them what was not true. There is no way out of this difficulty. Either Christ himself based his whole teaching on a misunderstanding or an error of fact, or else his own apostles misunderstood him, did not know what he meant by his Kingdom of Heaven. . . . You cannot get out of the difficulty by saying that Christ meant a second coming which has not happened yet. St. Paul and the other apostles thought he meant a second coming which was to happen in the lifetime of some of them. And if they were wrong about that they may well have been wrong about Christ's whole doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, about the very nature of what he meant by it." * What Jesus preached was a new birth of the human soul.

The Parting of the Ways.

The religious life of Israel supplied the historical antecedents of Christianity. The Jews repudiated Christ. Judaism goes on in its own way : Christianity another way. Professor de Burgh

* *The Literary Man's New Testament* : W. L. Courtney.

writes : " It was through the mediation of Christianity that the spiritual inheritance of Israel was transmitted to the Western world. In the process of transmission it was remoulded and transformed ; much that was distinctive of Judaism was dropped, and what was assimilated became the groundwork of a new structure. Henceforward the two religions went their several ways ; the consciousness of historical relationship served but to widen the chasm that parted them. The continuity is most apparent in the conception of the divine kingdom. It was natural that the disciples of the new faith should turn for anticipations of the gospel to the prophets rather than to the law. For to the prophets had been revealed the vision of ' the day of Jehovah,' when justice shall prevail and oppression and wrong shall vanish, when men ' shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more,' when ' they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain ; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Their reception of these truths had been trammelled by limitations, by their prejudice for the prerogatives of the peculiar people, their failure to reconcile the spiritual claim of the individual with that of the community, their imperfect realisation of divine immanence, and

their relegation of the ideal society to future time. In the teaching of the gospel, the thought of the kingdom was freed, once and for all, from these restrictions. The individual could find salvation and win eternal life only through incorporation in the divine society, whose members were bound one to another in their personal relationship to its head."

The Kingdom Again.

On the subject of the Kingdom, Dr. Maurice Jones (*The New Testament in the Twentieth Century*) adds another point: "Was Christ misled in His expectations of a catastrophic end of the world order, and of the immediate establishment of the Kingdom of God? All the evidence adduced seems to prove that our Lord did expect the Kingdom to come, and to come supernaturally and in the immediate future. Was He misled in His expectations, and was He, therefore, as Schweitzer maintains, nothing more than a deluded enthusiast, who imagined that He was to have been the agent of God in bringing about a catastrophic end of His age? If we keep merely to the letter of His teaching we may have to answer this question in the affirmative. The fact, however, that our Lord utilised the current Jewish apocalyptic as the verbal form in which to set forth His conceptions of the Last Things should not blind us to the transcendence of the spirit of His teaching when compared with that

of contemporary eschatology. If the emphasis is laid on the spirit rather than on the form of Christ's eschatological teaching, there would seem to be no real difficulty in affirming that He was not wrong in His expectations. In this, as in so many other connections, there is tremendous force in Sanday's remark that our Lord enriched every Jewish idea by putting more into it than was found there."

The Creation of His Age.

The apocalyptic writings, and their doctrines, referred to on previous pages, are of importance in connection with the interpretation of the Person and teaching of Christ. "The main contention of this school," says Dr. Maurice Jones,* "is that the key to the understanding of our Lord's life and teaching consists in realising that He was completely governed by the eschatological view that he was designed by the Father to bring the present world-order to an end as the essential preliminary to the establishment of the Kingdom of God in another world. He was thus the pure creation of His age, exclusively possessed by the eschatological ideas prevalent at that period, and never rose above the atmosphere in which he was born and lived."

The presence of these ideas in the Gospels is clear enough.

* *The New Testament in the Twentieth Century.*

THE PERSONALITY OF JESUS

When an ordinary person, like myself, turns to see what the modernist Christian scholar has to say about the personality of Jesus he has to reckon with many refinements and subtleties of expression. He was human, but He was also divine. "We must absolutely jettison the traditional doctrine that His personality was not human, but divine. There is for us no such thing as human nature apart from human personality: the distinction that He was Man but not 'a' man, while it has deep religious value, has ceased to be tenable."

I take the following passage from *The Way of Modernism*: "For what is meant is that Jesus does not stand alone as 'a' man might be thought to stand, isolated from his fellows. He is one of them among them. He is identified with the whole experience of the race, within it, not outside it as an individual by himself. He is a member of the group, the family, of men, not separated and not separable from it. So like Adam He is representative—the one of the old, the other of the new, moral life of mankind. Without breach in continuity or solidarity a new character is given to the race, a new social unity is established: a new type, to become endemic and spread its contagion through the whole race."

Again, on the personality of Jesus:—

"The conditions precedent include the facts

of the whole of the long life-history of Man, but more particularly the special cultural history of the race to which Jesus belonged—all his own inheritance of national religion and ideas of psalmists, prophets, and apocalyptists, which formed the *substratum* of His own personal conscious experience. He came into the world with this inheritance ; or, at any rate, it fashioned Him from the moment of His birth and provided the channels of His thought, even though He might cut some new ones or divert and give a new direction to the old.

“ If we give full weight to this cultural inheritance as it is known to us to-day, we find in Jesus a newness and originality of thought which is selective and evolutionary, shewing that He was on a higher plane and carrying us with Him, in the manner of the saying attributed to Him about the Law, ‘ I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.’ By His rejection of some old ideas and the emphasis of His selection, He becomes the creator of something new in the history of religion : a new conception of God and of Man and of the relations existing (‘ potentially,’ perhaps, but that is to say for all religion *really* existing) between them, of the essential character of God and the meaning and purpose of human life.”

Jesus was ‘ unique ’ but he was human. Professor Bethune-Baker says : “ I think this reading

of the facts has won fairly wide recognition among students to-day, who are no longer hypnotized by orthodox presuppositions." It is not to our traditional theological system that we look for our belief in Jesus Christ to-day.

Belief "is not dependent on the theological system which was gradually built up on the basis of traditional beliefs and customs, and the *data* of gospels and epistles invested, from the time the collection was made, with infallible authority as transmitting both true history in detail and true interpretation of its significance." None of the old doctrines of Fall of Man, and Atonement and Heaven and Hell are credible to-day. As it happened St. Paul was a theologian; his epistles are saturated with ideas that are foreign to the teachings of Jesus. He laid down the framework of a theology on which has been raised a vast superstructure. Perhaps he deflected Christianity into a channel through which has run the muddy waters of centuries of controversy. The story of St. Paul is given in another section of this little book and I need not add to it here. How much of the Christianity of Christ has been unconsciously perverted through the course of centuries one cannot say.

I shall only quote Dean Inge: "There is no evidence that the historical Christ ever intended to found a new institutional religion. He neither attempted to make a schism in the

Jewish Church, nor to substitute a new system for it. He placed himself deliberately in the prophetic line, only claiming to sum up the series in Himself. The whole manner of His life and teaching was prophetic."

The Dean also remarks that : " The history of religions is generally a history of a decline. In Judaism the prophets came before the Scribes and the Pharisees. Brahmanism and Buddhism were both degraded by superstitions and unethical rites. Christianity, which began as a republication of the purest prophetic teaching, has suffered the same fate."

X

PRE-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

IT was Nietzsche who called Plato "a Christian before Christ." I remember when I first met that phrase I got interested in Plato. If not quite true there is some truth in the assertion. "Plato's philosophy or poetry, call it which we will, is part of the very texture of Christianity as a way of life." 'Christianity' five centuries before Christ. Although the Greeks worshipped many gods (before the intellectual revolution set in) they had no revealed book of religion. No priests that taught religion by authority.

In the fifth century B.C. the Athenians had mostly ceased to believe in their pagan gods ; a



Photo : W. F. Mansell.

GREEK DIVINITIES (POSEIDON, DIONYSUS, AND DEMETER) ON THE PARTHENON
FRIEZE

spirit of free inquiry and scientific thought was abroad. Socrates could not accept the traditional beliefs. He it was who awakened among the Athenian youth "a desire to know." For Socrates and Plato philosophy was a way of life. We may call it religion, or we may call it philosophy. The Greek religious philosophy included the whole range of virtues, harmony of mind and body. Virtue in the soul is as health in the body.

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Socrates.

Socrates was scientific thinker, philosopher, and also a religious mystic. He had strange ecstasies comparable to many stories of mediæval saints. Sometimes "he stood stark and silent for long stretches of time in the thoroughfare or the portico, wrapped in mystic trance. The inward voice—the *daimonion* (divine thing) he called it—which counselled him audibly against peril at critical moments of his life. Socrates' nature was inaccessible to any thought of compromise; he had been posted by 'God' as a sentinel and must be faithful to his watch."

We are told how, when he was between thirty and forty years of age, the Delphic Oracle declared Socrates to be the wisest of men, and so summoned him to the mission to which he gave the

rest of his life. "We may fancy him asking the modern Englishman what precisely he meant by such terms as 'honour' or a 'gentleman' or a 'Christian.' He would show relentlessly the vagueness of men's notions about such matters, and that they had never thought them out or envisaged the alternatives ; above all, that their views and their practice were but a pale reflexion of the average opinion of the world around them. And this, moreover, in the one concern of surpassing moment, the pearl of great price, the chief good and end of life."

Socrates abandoned the traditional belief in the gods at the cost of his life. He was accused of impiety and of corrupting the young. He was condemned to death. "I was not unconscious," he told his Judges, "of the enmity which I proved, and I lamented and feared this ; but necessity was laid upon me—the word of God, I thought, ought to be considered first."

Plato, his disciple, tells us all this, for Socrates wrote nothing. He talked and discoursed. Neither did Christ leave any written word. He talked and discoursed with the people and His disciples. He, too, suffered death because His message of the Kingdom was misunderstood.

By B.C. 300, the development of Greek culture had been arrested ; it was about to pass into other hands. The conflict among the Greek States was an unhappy episode ; the shadow of Alexander

the Great of Macedonia now loomed over Greece ; he subjugated the Greek States and became head of a Greek league. At the age of thirty-three he was dead (B.C. 323) ; so, too, was Greece's greatest philosopher. There were none left able to carry on their work.

Greek Influence.

It is too long a story to tell how, when the time came, much of Greek philosophy, much of the mythical lore, much of Oriental beliefs and "mystery-religions," and their strange usages, passed easily from land to land and how much of it found its way into Christianity.

It would take us out of our course to inquire how it was that while so much of the influence of the Greek mind survives to-day the Greek religion in spite of certain contributions to Christian thought "may be said to have collapsed in ruins and to have left little posterity. Its fate is thus unlike that of early Hebrew religion, which we can trace in the same way, making painful steps upwards from a barbaric level ; for Hebrew religion has not only survived in strength to the present day, but has been part parent both of Christianity and of Islam."

Greek thought was aware of new and vast horizons. But the common man of that day could not understand these high intellectual

speculations that seemed hostile to current pagan religious views, and far remote from the warmth of the religious emotion experienced by the common man. These ideas were too intellectualist to be understood, and "often killed where they sought to liberate."

The religious philosophy of the great teachers was too remote, and concerned too much with general and abstract ideas for the common people ; it passed over their heads. While the Hebrew religion became enshrined in sacred books, the Greeks had no revealed book of religion ; it was not fixed ; there were many gods ; there were no priests that taught religion by authority, nor did the State. Much Greek religious emotion and ritual centred round the Olympian mythology, which included the "mysteries" and consisted of sacramental feasts and offerings, purifications and mystic performances practised by congregations of certain initiated men and women.

The Mystery-Cults.

Of the nature of those religious mysteries the modern world still knows very little. "The hold which the secrecy of these meetings, together with their extraordinary worship, must naturally have taken upon minds more fresh and childlike than our advanced ages can boast of, was increased

by all the mechanical contrivances of the effects of light and sound.

“Mysterious voices were heard singing, whispering and sighing all round, lights gleamed in manifold colours from above and below, figures appeared and disappeared—all the arts were taxed to their utmost to make these performances as attractive and profitable (to the priests) as could be.”

Amongst these Mysteries were those of Eleusis, deemed the most sacred and solemn of all the festivals. The initiated were supposed to be under the care of the deities. They enjoyed happiness and security, and these benefits were extended beyond the grave. To the initiated there was this assurance: “Happy and blessed one, Thou shalt be a god instead of a mortal.” To them, to be a god meant to be immortal.

There were also the Mysteries of Orpheus, and of other gods and goddesses, and mystery-cults extending even to foreign gods like Mithra, the doctrines, rites, and ceremonial connected with whose worship influenced, at a later day, Christian rites and ceremonials.

Parallels to Christianity, in Mithraic belief, Mithraic ceremonies, and Mithraic legends there undoubtedly were. Some of its secret rites and mysteries had close resemblance to those of Christianity. Legends of Mithra are his birth from a rock, and his adoration by shepherds, and

his final ascension to the heavens where he remains to protect the faithful. We have the parallel of baptism for believers, a communion of bread and water, or wine ; the doctrine of sacrifice, heaven for those found worthy, a descent into the realms of darkness for the unworthy ; a final judgment, when the just are rendered immortal, and the unjust destroyed everlastingly. Mithra was a Persian deity whose worship spread to the West and even as far as Britain. He "appears to have lived an incarnate life on earth, and in some unknown manner to have suffered death for the good of mankind, an image symbolising his resurrection being employed in his ceremonies. Tarsus, the home of St. Paul, was one of the great centres of his worship."

The doctrine of sacrifice was associated with Mithra and "from the blood of the sacrifice came the world's peace and plenty. That this sacrifice had originally a human victim, and that it later involved the idea of the sacramental death of a human being, is clear from the fact that the Church historian, Socrates, believed that human victims were still sacrificed in the Mithraic mysteries down to some period before A.D. 360. Thus the paramount Christian idea of the sacrifice of the lamb of God was one with which every worshipper of Mithra was familiar."

The resemblance of the Mithraic eucharist to the Christian Sacrament is apparent ; in the first

century, almost identical. Later (in the Church) it became a Sacrament. Other resemblances are the sanctification of Sunday and of December 25th, the birthday of Mithra. The date was only taken over by the Church in the fourth century as the date, actually unknown, of the birth of Jesus.

The Legacy of Greece.

I take the following from Professor Julian Huxley's book, *Religion Without Revelation*. "It should be emphasised once more that without certain currents of Greek religion which had been incubating and developing in the Eastern Mediterranean for several centuries, the development of Christianity would have been quite other than it was. It could never have spread among the Gentiles as it did without the preparation of Orphism and other mystery religions, nor could the ideas of personal redemption and happy immortality or of the value of purity have so taken possession of its doctrines. It would have lacked the idea of the Logos, and would never have been able to achieve the intellectual heights of its later theology without Greek philosophy. In all probability the Lord's Supper could never have become the central feature of Christian ritual without the numerous similar Greek rites that were its forerunners. In the words of an authority on the subject : ' It has been the result of much modern research to reveal the truth that the

indebtedness of Christian dogma and ritual to the later Hellenic paganism was far greater than used to be supposed.' ”

Product of Evolution.

Professor Julian Huxley claims that “ the first point to realise is that religions, like living animal and plant species, are the product of evolution. . . . Nearly a million species of animals are known. Of these, only a few thousands are endowed with anything which can be called intelligence, only a few tens with high intelligence, and only one with conceptual thought. In the same way, there are hundreds of known religions ; it had better be left to more orthodox writers than myself to enumerate those which can be called high religions. And, like animal evolution, religious evolution witnesses to a central upward trend ; both also show us the retention of low types along with high, the throwing out of blind alley side-branches of specialisation at every level, and sometimes even degeneration.”

Another evolutionist writer puts it this way : “ The human race has a million years behind it, and it may have another million years in front of it, a million years of effort, of endeavour and achievement. We are what the past has made us, and the more one probes into the mystery of psychology the more dependent we find we are on the past history of the human race. As

vestiges of our past ancestry linger on in our physical bodies, evidence of an evolutionary process, so, we might say, traits of past ways of thinking influence all our minds. Unless, by an effort, we examine and correct, where correction is needed, inherited and traditional beliefs, we passively retain them as a matter of course."

How strange that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself.

Some one said, "it is the attempt to punish as God is supposed to punish, that largely accounts for the hideous record of religious persecution."

XI

REMINISCENCE

LOOKING backwards to my early youth, I see myself a young pagan ; a Christian pagan—pagan from *pagus*, a village. With inherited beliefs, that were no beliefs because they were only the fated content of my mind. They belonged to the star under which I was born. I was no more responsible for them than for the shape of my nose.

Looking backwards, I like to think of life as a

road winding uphill : ever new vistas and wider expanses, and a beckoning horizon. Life an adventure. Looking back, I like to think of adventures among books throughout years gone by. Even now I scarcely ever open a book but with a sense of adventure, so often have I found there something I least expected—a flashing thought, a new idea, a suggestion arresting for the moment and often taken in and becoming a permanent possession of one's mind.

Looking back, I think 'Fate and Circumstance are strong.' Happy the man whose young days were spent in roaming leafy lanes, on purple heather moorland, by running, murmuring waters, in age-old woods, in valley and upland, 'in the green bosom of the sunny hills.' For myself, at any rate,

They give me back the golden dream
Through which old echoes yet are ringing.

The wooded heights, the old town upon the hill, the classic valley steeped in romance, legend, and poetry. The moods of the seasons—remembered Springs, glorious Autumns, Summer days and Winter weather—sunshine, wind and rain and storm, starry nights.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran.

The lines are from Wordsworth. Little did I think how much I was to owe to Wordsworth ;

I read him well in those days ; understanding, maybe, but faintly.

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha ! with thy living wave.
Sing him thy best ! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

The books that influence one's mind are rarely, I think, of the didactic type ; they strike no responsive chord, they never kindle a single emotion. But, when one's reading does come to the educational type of book I prefer a good trustworthy popular exposition of science to a philosophical treatise. The one is substance, the other too often shadow.

I would not be so foolish as to decry the work of any philosophic thinker, to belittle the attempts of scholars to answer the question "What is Truth?" or of learned men in philosophy or theology who seek to add to the sum of human knowledge or even to explain the universe. But to the plain man they are all, in the main, vastly unsatisfying. You will pick up a few jewel thoughts in the course of reading these philosophers. You will be startled by a few great thoughts and expressions that illumine and enlarge your vision, but in the main you are likely to be maddened to death by hair-splitting controversy, wearisome, unprofitable, and unending.

It is the same with theological writers and professors of religion.

To return to that subject : There may be certain vital Christian verities enshrined in Church formulas and creeds which the Church cannot abandon. But what they are in essentials some of us despair of discovering. What is essential to one prominent divine is "idolatry" to another. Dr. H. D. Major, a leading modernist, complains that he receives letters from his Christian brethren beginning "My dear Judas." The common sense of the "plain man" is shocked to find that, while there is *professed* uniformity of belief in, say, the Church of England as a whole, there is a travesty of inward conviction in professing individuals. All these individuals can defend their position and claim to be honest-minded men. I am not seeking to deny that. But the "plain man" has his own thoughts. The domestic quarrels of the churches and of Bishops decide nothing ; they will never decide anything. Some of the Bishops have now, at long last and under pressure, said plainly and publicly things that have been the commonplace of the thoughts and talk of most intelligent persons for a long time. They have cleared the air, or tried to clear the air, of all pretence. A former Lord Halifax, it is said, once remarked to Bishop Burnet : "I believe as much as I can, and God Almighty will, I am sure,

pardon me if I have not the digestion of an ostrich."

Art and religion satisfy deep needs of the human mind ; Einstein, I believe, said that some great work of literature or music matters more to us than any scientific theory. But so does science satisfy a human need—"the immensely important human need for comprehension."

XII

WHAT IS RELIGION?

WHAT is Religion ? A seemingly simple question ; but hair-splitting theologians and philosophers seem unable to answer it to each other's satisfaction. As a " plain man " I accept this :—

Religion means simply reverence for everything sacred, and any manifestation of this feeling. What a man sees for himself to be sacred is that man's religion, and in so far as he loves and pursues it he is religious. Doctrines may go, churches may faint and fail, but it does not follow that there will be less religion in the world.

As a plain man I accept this from Professor Whitehead :—

Religion is solitariness [not solitude] ; and if you are never solitary you are never religious. Collective enthusiasms, revivals, institutions, churches, rituals, bibles, codes of behaviour, are the trappings of religion, the passing forms. They may be useful

or harmful ; they may be authoritatively ordained, or merely temporal expedients. But the end of religion is beyond all this.

That this or that doctrine was inspired (*i.e.*, immediately caused) by God, I do not believe. But this (from Lord Balfour) I accept :—

Nothing, and least of all what most we value, has come to us direct from heaven. Yet if we are still to value it, the modern conception of its natural growth requires us more than ever to believe that from heaven in the last resort it comes.

I make no pretence to an expert's knowledge of the evolution of religion, nor am I deeply versed in philosophy. As a plain man I must rely on what reasonable sense and informed judgment, even if faulty, I may have. I do not know that there is any agreement among people about what they mean by religion in their discussions. To pagans, religion was belief in many deities. To us, to-day, the distinctive mark of religion is the belief in God. That, I know, does not embrace all forms of religion ; it is only the mark of a particular religion. The later Hebrew prophets declared that true religion was to do justly and love mercy and to walk humbly with one's God. Other prophets have other views. I leave metaphysics and philosophy to the experts. I shall be long dead before they are in agreement about the exact sphere of religion.

My ideal, as it has been of many another, is found in Wordsworth :—

. . . And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused.
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the broad ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

Wordsworth touched " the depth and not the tumult of the soul." He went to Nature to " see into the life of things," and his poetry, as Mr. Wilfred Whitten has happily said, " continually reminds us that man, who knew not how to live in Eden, has still to learn to live outside it."

The one thing that stands in the way of our forming any definite idea of the meaning of the Universe is *the limitation of the human mind*. The advance of recent science, if nothing else, makes that clear. The mathematician—Einstein and others—picture a universe of four dimensions which cannot be described in terms of anything we know ; of anything that the mind can apprehend as in a real state of being. Can your mind take hold of the elusive abstractions and conceptions of Relativity, with its ideas of hyperspace, its mysterious space-time continuum, of time that does not exist in itself, of finite space and infinite time ? No, the marvels of Space and Time—different aspects of one thing—are beyond us.

The more you reflect, the less you understand. But, they hold the promise of a revelation.

Man is isolated on a physical world. Nay more, the very nature of that physical world he does not understand. What we do know is that science tells us nothing about its substance, but only about its structure. The table on which I am writing seems substantial enough, yet resolved into its elements it is a thing of shadows, of electrons, specs and agglomerations of electric charges which are not substantial in the ordinary sense, they are, indeed, we know not what—except that they are, so far as we know, the primordial something out of which *all* matter is composed. “The frank realisation,” Eddington says, “that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant of recent advances.”

How are these things, think you, related to our human nature? The unseen to the seen? Is the universe ‘spiritual’ in reality? We do not know, but we do learn that scientists no longer identify the real only with what is the concrete. Those of my readers who have made any study of the way science is tending will know the far-reaching problems it has reached. Eddington says “the idea of a universal Mind or Logos would be, I think, a fairly plausible inference from the present state of scientific theory; at least it is in harmony with it.”

The world of atoms, then, of the behaviour of

electrons that constitute the atom, is a mystery. We know nothing about their real being. "Electrons," says J. B. S. Haldane, perhaps whimsically, "may be spiritually inert, they may be something like sensations, they may be good spirits or evil spirits. The physicist can only tell us that they repel one another according to a certain law, are attracted by positive charges according to another law, and so on."

And so with Astronomy; we know a vast deal, and we know nothing. If you have not read a little book, *Eos*, by Sir J. H. Jeans, do so now.

A Vision of the Universe.

I have said little book, but it is a big book, even if it only runs to some eighty small-sized pages. The title *Eos* is quite appropriate, for, as this eminent astronomer says, "astronomy is a science in which exact truth is ever stranger than fiction, in which the imagination ever labours panting and breathless behind the reality, and about which one could hardly be prosaic if one tried."

Has it ever struck you that although man has existed something like 300,000 years on earth, and that 10,000 generations of men have come and gone, yet, *the first 9,990 unhesitatingly regarded the earth as the centre, and terrestrial life as the central fact, of the universe?* In the light of that long, long stretch of generations, isn't it a thing of promise

for science that *only the last ten generations of men* knew that the earth is not the centre of all things and that its majesty and dignity as the abode of men is a little thing in relation to the wider and vast aspects of our knowledge of the astronomer's cosmos. In another ten generations how much more extended may be our knowledge? Suppose, like Jeans, we represent the earth as seventy years old, then we must think of the human race as an infant three days old, and its science a few minutes old.

Our vision of the universe is continually expanding, and expanding at an ever-increasing rate. Yet, says Sir J. H. Jeans, this expansion is not destined to go on for ever, because according to the theory of generalised relativity space cannot extend for ever. "It has no limit, but is nevertheless finite like the surface of the earth." Some of my readers will like to chew over that puzzle.

"Exact figures are impossible, but Dr. Hubble has calculated that space is not likely to extend to more than about a thousand times as far as the farthest nebula visible in the biggest telescope." The farthest nebula is millions and millions of miles distant; multiply that figure by 1,000 and think of the result, then ponder over the fact that "nothing prevents our going on and on in space beyond this distance." But, Sir J. H. Jeans warns us that, "if we do, we merely come back to ourselves."

Our thought for the moment, then, is the note of immensity, inconceivable immensity ! And with that the thought of our infant minds :—

“ Having grasped that the world is round, the infant speedily forms a fair idea of the size. Our particular infant, mankind, has made the great discovery of the existence of the outer world, has formed some conception of its size, and adjusted his ideas, not by a process of slow revelation, but by a brain-flash of the last few seconds. In his mature years and his staid old age he is no doubt destined to make many sensational discoveries, but he can never again live through the immortal moment at which he first grasped the immensity of the outer world. We only live through a few ticks of his clock, and fate might have ordained that they should be anywhere in the three days that the child has already lived, or in the seventy long, and possibly tedious, years yet to come. The wonderful thing is that she has selected for us what is, perhaps, in some ways, the most sensational moment of all in the life of our race.

“ The child sets its newly-awakened mind to work to adjust and co-ordinate a new array of facts. If the world was not made to surround its cradle, what purpose can it serve ? If the lights of the great ships in the harbour were not designed to light its nursery at night, what can they possibly be for ? And, most interesting problem of all,

if the world is such a big affair, can there be other cradles and other babies ? ”

The Stars in their Courses.

For myself, I find more satisfying religion in Sir Francis Younghusband's *Life in the Stars*, published recently, than in a whole theological library. The author's astronomy may be tinged with romance. But he images a religious view broad in its sweep. Let me briefly sketch it, just as a thing of interest, and because it shows the trend of many other minds. Let me add, also, that I know the mystical conceptions of Sir Francis have, in reality, no proved scientific basis.

This famous explorer has travelled alone, and by night, the great expanses of the silent desert. He has held communion with the stars. They have made a deep and lasting impress on him.

I have ever had the feeling of being part of the one great starry whole, and to look at things from that standpoint. I belonged to this earth—to this star. But I belonged also to the whole galaxy of stars, and was affected by them—and affected by them in a most soothing, elevating way.

Under the influence of starry skies his spiritual sensibility was awakened. Sir Francis knows, more than most, the main known facts of astronomy—"those staggering facts which almost numb one's power of wonder." He outlines them, he describes the stellar universe. Nay

more, he leaps the barrier of actual knowledge ; he gives free play to his imagination.

These glittering points we see on a bright starlit night are but few in the immense galaxy of stars unseen by the naked eye or through the most powerful telescope. There are at least three thousand million stars in our stellar system alone, and probably many thousands of millions more.

The sun is a star. The stars are suns ; many of which have planetary systems of their own. Our sun, Professor Eddington, the eminent astronomer, says, belongs to a stellar system of some three thousand million stars, all belonging to the same order of magnitude as our sun, that is to say, with diameters of a million miles or more. Beyond our solar system are other stellar systems, or spiral nebulae, excessively large and unthinkably distant.

And all these worlds are separated by inconceivable distances from each other. The best picture we can make to ourselves of the universe is to think of it as made up of a number of sub-universes, like islands in a vast ocean. But they are not isolated, like islands. They at least send light to one another—light carried on waves of the ether which fills the intervening space.

The sun is ninety-three million miles from the earth. That is as nothing. Some stars are so distant that light from them, travelling, as it does, at the fearful velocity of 186,000 miles per

second, or something like 6,000,000 million miles a year, "must have started on its journey a *million* years ago, not merely before the birth of Christ, and not merely before the dawn of civilisation, but long before human beings of any kind existed on this planet."

Our sun, we are told, is one of a group of some two or three thousand million stars which all sprang from the same nebula. And these incredibly numerous stars "are all built of the same ultimate materials, not hard, solid bits of some inert stuff, but excessively minute units of very active electricity. These thousands of millions of stars are, every one of them, composed of the same elements as the sun, this earth, and our own bodies are made of."

It is the spirituality of the universe that appeals to many scientific men like Sir Francis Young-husband. "We look on men, not as machines only, but as embodiments of spirit. And the point of view I propose to put forward . . . is that the stellar world is entitled to be looked upon with the same respect."

Sir Francis enters the realm of speculative fancy. He pictures an ascending order of things. He quotes Lord Kelvin as saying : "We all confidently believe that there are at present, and have been from time immemorial, many worlds of life besides our own." He takes the universe as a *living* whole.

On the whole, then, we may take it that philosophy is against the view that the universe is a mere aggregate, a meaningless collection of things, a purposeless swirl of events, and is in favour of the view that it is a coherent *whole*, under definite direction. . . . Just as a man is more than a complex system of millions of millions of cells, so is *the universe* looked upon as a mechanical system of wondrous ingenuity, but also something more. Spirit, not physical force, gives momentum to the whole. And this conclusion of modern philosophers, with all the results of modern science at their disposal, that the universe is in its ultimate nature spiritual, only confirms the views of the ancient philosophers.

On the wings of well-controlled imagination, Sir Francis speeds through the heavens and in spirit explores the entire universe. We are units of a vast community. We are part of an all-inclusive universe. But we need not follow his speculations, for the view that there are other spheres where dwell higher beings is but speculation, even if supported by the evidence of scientists, philosophers, and poets. They hold that there is all-pervasive and unceasing Spiritual Activity.

Something which stands beyond, behind, and within the passing flux of immediate things ; something which is real and yet waiting to be realized ; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of all present facts ; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension ; something whose possession is the final goal and yet is beyond all reach ; something which is the ultimate ideal and the hopeless quest.

The Universe as a Whole.

And this something, perhaps the clearest and deepest of all living English philosophical thinkers, Dr. A. N. Whitehead, says, is God.

The Universe a coherent *whole* ! ‘ we are units of a vast community ; we are part of an all-inclusive universe.’ The trend of the greatest thinkers of to-day in their religious outlook is to regard the universe as an Infinite Whole, and this planet and ourselves as but a small fragment of it. William James counsels us to get “ the idea of a world growing not integrally but piece-meal *by the contributions of its several parts.*”

He asks us to *suppose* that the world’s author put the case to us before Creation, saying :—

I am going to make a world not certain to be saved, a world the perfection of which shall be conditional merely, the condition being that each several agent does its own “ level best.” I offer you the chance of taking part in such a world. Its safety you see is unwarranted. It is a real adventure, with real danger, yet it may win through. It is a social scheme of co-operative work genuinely to be done. Will you join the procession ? Will you trust yourself and trust the other agents enough to face the risk ?

James opines that if you are a normally constituted person, if you have “ a healthy-minded buoyancy,” you would *not* reject such an offer as “ not safe enough.” You may not do all you could do ; if you do not, it remains in so far left undone. You might not realise yourself in this

adventurous sail on an uncharted sea. If so, would you feel recompensed if your reward was this epitaph :—

A shipwrecked sailor, buried on this coast,
Bids you set sail.
Full many a gallant bark, when we were lost,
Weathered the gale.

Is this conception of *our* little part in a universe which is an Infinite Whole ; is this idea of many worlds, of many higher forms of experience, a dream ? It may be. There is no sort of proof behind it ; on the other hand, is there any scientific fact, or any valid reason that affirms surely that it cannot be as William James pictures it ?

Our thoughts now are of man's infinite littleness and I add another quotation from William James ; you will find the passage in his well-known book, *Pragmatism* :—

I firmly disbelieve myself that our human experience is the highest form of experience extant in the universe. I believe rather that we stand in much the same relation to the whole of the universe as our canine and feline pets do to the whole of human life. They inhabit our drawing-rooms and libraries. They take part in scenes of whose significance they have no inkling. They are merely tangent to curves of history the beginnings and ends and forms of which pass wholly beyond their ken. So we are tangent to the wider life of things. But, just as many of the dog's and cat's ideals coincide with our ideals, and the dogs and cats have daily living proof of the fact, so we may well believe, on the proofs that religious experience

affords, that higher powers exist and are at work to save the world on ideal lines similar to our own.

“ We cannot form,” says the Earl of Balfour, “ any adequate idea of the mode in which God is related to, and acts on, the world of phenomena. That He created it, that He sustains it, we are driven to believe. How He created it, how He sustains it, is impossible for us to imagine.”

Who shall say that the conceptions of God, the conceptions of thinking minds to-day are not infinitely higher and worthier of His creatures than those enshrined in the traditional outworn beliefs over which earnest ecclesiastics still wrangle? To me, at least, these ecclesiastics make man out less than he is ; they make God even more inconceivable than he is.

The Three Voices.

For me there is no puzzlement about all these speculative conceptions and immensities ; certainly less than there is about the jugglery of certain theologians, much as I respect them, much as I am indebted to them. Neither is there any perplexing mysticism about them. Any mind can take hold of them. They are, at least, intelligible. As we stand on a hill on a still, starlit night, if we have any sensitivity of soul at all, we shall feel the influence of the stars slowly stealing in upon us. In many another moment of life we experience the

same thing—deep intuitions and felt experiences, unique and personal ; they cannot be brushed aside, and they are the true material of religion ; they are of the spirit, spiritual. The thoughts that come to us in our noblest moments are the index of our spiritual life. Mysticism you say. Very likely, but you cannot dismiss mysticism with a gesture. I shall come back to that.

“ If *Mind* is at the foundation of things, if it is this Creative Activity that keeps it all going ; if *Mind* may embody itself in matter, then *Mind* may have shaped matter into forms, not of life, but of some other quality unknown to us, but which would, like life, form a basis for consciousness.”

What does Wordsworth say :—

To every Form of being is assigned
An *active* Principle : howe'er removed
From sense and observation, it subsists
In all things, in all natures ; in the stars
Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone
That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
The moving waters and the invisible air.
Whate'er exists hath properties that spread
Beyond itself, communicating good,
A simple blessing, or with evil mixed ;
Spirit that knows no insulated spot.
No chasm, no solitude ; from link to link
It circulates, the Soul of all the world.
This is the freedom of the universe
Unfolded still the more, more visible,

The more we know ; and yet is revered least,
And least respected in the human mind,
Its most apparent home.

The Earl of Balfour has written :—

Let us conceive ourselves to be gazing on a clear and quiet night upon the unveiled glory of the heavens, striving to form some adequate representation of the greatness and splendour of the innumerable suns which, crowded though they seem, lie far removed from each other and from us in the unsounded depths of space. And then, when imagination wearies of the effort, let us consider the petty planet which for the moment is our home, recall the tremendous events of which in the Christian story it is alleged to have been the scene. Surely in the mood which this experience naturally provokes, the contrast between the conclusion of Science and the doctrines of religion, though it may leave our reason unperplexed, must somewhat disturb our feelings.

It may disturb the feelings of those who are yoked to narrow, unsatisfying formulas and doctrines, but it leaves the untrammelled minds of other men unperplexed ; it also serves to enlarge the vision of the more broad-minded for whom the " reconciliation " of science and religion has no meaning.

A professor of Natural History in one of his Gifford lectures pictured the three voices of Nature :—

She joins hands with us ; and says *Struggle, Endeavour*. She comes close to us, we hear her heart beating ; she says *Wonder, Enjoy, Revere*. She whispers secrets to us, we cannot always catch her words ; she says *Search, Enquire*. These three voices appeal to Hand and Heart and Head, to the trinity

of our being. In listening to them we may be disciplined to hear even more august voices. Man's struggle for food and foothold have often helped him to much higher reaches of endeavour; to be thrilled with beauty may be a step to loving goodness; to try to find out scientifically what is true in Nature may be the beginning of waiting patiently upon the Lord. But our point is that to listen to the three voices of Nature is in itself worth while. It is a necessary and natural discipline of the developing human spirit.

We are familiar with the story of a rugged and very human Hebrew prophet, who after severe discipline climbed a mountain and heard the three voices of Nature. First, there was a great and strong wind,—a symbol of the practical voice, surely, commands man to build his house upon a rock and to struggle against the storm, which teaches the sailor to trim his sails and the husbandman to prepare for the rain. Second there was the earthquake,—a symbol of the emotional, surely, for is there anything so awful that stirs man and beast more deeply, that moves us down to the primæval bedrock of human nature laid down in the time of the cave-dwellers? Third, there was the fire,—a symbol of the scientific voice, surely, for the fire of science burns up rubbish, melts out the gold, reduces things to a common denominator, and gives light to Man.

Now it seemed to the prophet that God was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, and it seems strictly correct to say that listening to the three voices of Nature is not in itself religious. But it is a good thing to listen, and it may form a preparation for religion. It was so in the prophet's case, for after the echoes of the wind and the earthquake and the fire had died away, he heard a still, small voice—God's voice—a sound of gentle stillness the margin says, which spoke very incisively to him. It was a great experience to the prophet to have heard the three voices of Nature, but it meant more for him practically to hear the still, small voice. And it may be in *obeying* it he understood afterwards that God *was* in the other voices too.

XIII

MODERN SCIENCE AND MODERN THOUGHT

The prophet Isaiah has been described as a mystic, and St. Paul has been described as a mystic. We might ask what part has Mysticism played in religion? We might even ask, did religion evolve from the mystical element in human nature? Some would have it that it did and that it has always marked religious activity on the main line of its evolution. Others, like Sir James Frazer, believe that religion evolved from the desire of primitive man to propitiate or conciliate the power superior to him and believed to control the course of Nature and of human life.

There are mystics and mystics ; a mystic whose state is due to a disordered condition of the brain, or the outcome of an abnormal emotional state, is not of the same order as the person whose mystical reception and experience form part of his personality, a settled attitude of mind ; nor, in turn, is that to be identified with religious mysticism pure and simple.

All these types have been discussed and described by psychologists ; they have been the subject of careful analysis by William James and others. But I do not know that any professor whose province is physical science, and astronomy, and relativity, has ever entered the lists in defence

of mysticism, until Professor Eddington did so in his recent very able book, *The Nature of the Physical World*.

“Do not Underrate the Mystic.”

We have looked for our mystics among the poets and the artists, the literary visionaries and the deeply religious minded, and the imaginative. The minds which have responded to felt echoes, the minds which react to the impulses of the soul, the minds which dream dreams. These are the minds which out of a prosaic everyday world have shadowed the ultimate possibilities of the soul ; the minds which discern the rich and fine things of the spirit that belong to the universe as a whole, and of which man is a part.

However ‘vague and vast and sentimental,’ and however lacking a base in either fact or logic, the unassailable truth remains that certain mystical experiences are also states of knowledge. I quote William James : “They are (these mystical experiences) states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain ; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time.”

That is not to say that the authority is authority for any one but the mystic himself. He is and can be no dictator to others. As James

says, "Mystical truth exists for the individual who has the transport, but for no one else. It resembles the knowledge given to us in sensations more than that given by conceptual thought. Thought, with its remoteness and abstractness, has often enough in the history of philosophy been contrasted unfavourably with sensation."

James adds that as a matter of psychological fact, "mystical states of a well-pronounced and emphatic sort *are* usually authoritative over those who have them. They have been 'there,' and know. It is vain for rationalism to grumble about this. If the mystical truth that comes to a man proves to be a force that he can live by, what mandate have we of the majority to order him to live in another way? We can throw him into a prison or a madhouse, but we cannot change his mind—we commonly attach it only the more stubbornly to its beliefs. It mocks our utmost efforts, as a matter of fact, and in point of logic it absolutely escapes our jurisdiction. Our own more 'rational' beliefs are based on evidence exactly similar in nature to that which mystics quote for theirs. Our senses, namely, have assured us of certain states of fact; but mystical experiences are as direct perceptions of fact for those who have them as any sensations ever were for us. . . . The mystic is, in short, *invulnerable*, and must be left, whether we relish it or not, in undisturbed enjoyment of his creed. Faith, says

Tolstoy, is that by which men live. And faith-state and mystic-state are practically convertible terms."

Mysticism, and the deep intuitions, the felt experiences of men and women in their best moments, may be shadowy and elusive; too shadowy a thing on which to found an intellectual statement of belief. Surely, least of all may orthodox believers in the Christian faith, even the 'fundamentalists,' scorn the dreams of the mystic. The great Prophets were simply mystics; it was *their* mystic insight that marked an epoch in the history of mankind, a mysticism that in time crystallised, or solidified, into definite beliefs and tenets, whose basis and essence is formulated in Church creeds to-day. The prophet had his revelations and his visions; to communicate his visions, to drive home their truth to other minds, he gave them palpable or bodily shape and form. An intangible vision was transformed into something that had a literal existence. The sensitive soul of the prophet of old 'who walked with God' may have received a revelation of something high and divine. But what sort of God was it that the rude common people of Israel envisaged for themselves? I can think of these simple children of Israel with the idea of God "as a particularly irate and fussy schoolmaster who was continually 'strafing' the Israelites for trifling peccadilloes in the wilderness." A divine conception reduced to human form. It is the same conception to-day

among the vast multitude, if perhaps improved upon and on a little higher plane.

Would it be true to say that the aim of the modernists to-day is an untrammelled return to the original sources of religion, to the sources of the Christian religion? Its starting-point a re-emphasis of the belief in the Divine immanence in the universe and in mankind. It was at least something like that.

The Trend of Thought.

A return to the source of the natural springs of our spiritual being. Is it strange that Science, the matter-of-fact science we think of, seems to be less engrossed, in its outlook, with the merely *concrete* than it once was, turning a listening ear to the mysterious? For modern science has struck a vein in its researches more mysterious perhaps than any phenomena it has ever encountered. I am not fanciful. I have only been reading some recent scientific works.

Are the material things of our environment reality, or but the skeleton of reality? "Is it reasonable to inquire whether in *the mystical illusions* of man there is not a reflection of an underlying reality?" If an ordinary layman asked that question, he would only draw a smile. But, the exact words are taken from a recent book by Professor A. S. Eddington, whose name stands amongst the highest in the scientific world. So

does that of Dr. J. B. S. Haldane of Cambridge. "It seems to me," he says, "immensely unlikely that mind is a mere by-product of matter." "My own suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we *can* suppose. I have read and heard many attempts at a systematic account of it, from materialism and theosophy to the Christian system or that of Kant, and I have always felt that they were much too simple. I suspect that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of, or can be dreamed of, in any philosophy. That is the reason why I have no philosophy myself, and must be my excuse for dreaming."

Science has taken on 'the idealistic tinge.' I could multiply quotations. Instead, let me refer to Professor Eddington's views on science and mysticism in his recent book *The Nature of the Physical World*. One would least expect, I suppose, to find an eminent matter-of-fact scientist defending mysticism. Eddington seems to suspect that himself, for he remarks : "I suppose the most sweeping charge against me will be that I have been talking what at the back of my mind I must know is only a well-meaning kind of nonsense." But he has a defence to set up.

The aim of Eddington's book, as described by its title, is to make clear the scientific view of the world as it stands to-day. We have a good deal of difficult reading in following the chapters

on Relativity, on the nature of the Atom, the Electron, and the Quantum Theory, and the nature of Reality, before we come to his discussion of Mysticism. There is 'some kind of truth' at the base of the mystical contact of Nature. We have "to admit that in these moods we catch something of the true relation of the world to ourselves—a relation not hinted at in a purely scientific analysis of its contents. . . . Is it a question of a small nugget of reality buried under a mountain of illusion?"

Professor Eddington.

Eddington is ready to go outside the sphere of exact knowledge, and make great admissions: the entities of physics form only "a partial aspect of reality"; how are we to deal with the other part which "concerns us no less than the physical entities?" He continues: "If I were to try to put into words the essential truth revealed in the mystic experience, it would be that our minds are not apart from the world; and the feelings that we have of gladness and melancholy and our yet deeper feelings are not of ourselves alone, but are glimpses of a reality transcending the narrow limits of our particular consciousness—that the harmony and beauty of the face of Nature is at root one with the gladness that transfigures the face of man. . . . In the mystical feeling the truth is apprehended from

within and is, as it should be, a part of ourselves."

The entities of science, of physics, can from their very nature, Eddington tells us, form only a partial aspect of the reality. "Feelings, purpose, values, make up our consciousness as much as sense-impressions." One's spiritual environment is not to be compared with your scientific material world. "It is an everyday world to be compared with the material world of familiar experience. I claim it is no more real and no less real than that. Primarily it is not a world to be analysed, but a world to be lived in."

The alleged basis of mystical experience may possibly be valid; "but have I any reason to regard the religious interpretation currently given to it as anything more than muddle-headed romancing?" In history, religious mysticism has often been associated with extravagances that cannot be approved. And the same is to be said of abnormal experiences and revelations. "But to suppose that mystical religion is mainly concerned with these is like supposing that Einstein's theory is mainly concerned with the perihelion of Mercury, and a few other exceptional observations."

Is it true in history, Eddington asks, that material forces have been the most potent factors? Answering his own question he says: "Call it of God, of the Devil, fanaticism, un-

reason ; but do not underrate the power of the mystic. Mysticism may be fought as error or believed as inspired, but it is no matter for easy tolerance—

We are the music-makers
And we are the dreamers of dreams
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams ;
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams :
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems."

I permit myself one more quotation from a lengthy chapter :—

"It is the aim of physical science, so far as its scope extends, to lay bare the fundamental structure underlying the world ; but science has also to explain if it can, or else humbly to accept, the fact that from this world have arisen minds capable of transmuting the bare structure into the richness of our experience. It is not misrepresentation but rather achievement—the result perhaps of long ages of biological evolution—that we should have fashioned a familiar world out of the crude basis. It is a fulfilment of the purpose of man's nature. If likewise the spiritual world has been transmuted by a religious colour beyond anything implied in its bare external qualities, it may be allowable

to assert with equal conviction that this is not misrepresentation, but the achievement of a divine element in man's nature."

That, then, is how a matter-of-fact scientist speaks. As Eddington's *The Nature of the Physical World* is the latest scientific book I have read, I may stop here.

XIV

ANOTHER EXCURSION

IF I were to go on, I would only repeat myself. I would continue to speak of books that have intimately appealed to me, to thoughts that have elicited a personal response. Very likely I should be led to say more about Matthew Arnold, whose poetry brings you into the regions of aspiration. He saw life steadily and he saw it whole :—

And though we wear out life, alas !
Distracted as a homeless wind,
In beating where we must not pass,
In seeking what we shall not find ;

Yet we shall one day gain, life past,
Clear prospect o'er our being's whole,
Shall see ourselves, and learn at last
Our true affinities of soul.

I remember his memorable stanza :—

We cannot kindle when we will
 The fire which in the heart resides ;
 The spirit bloweth and is still,
 In mystery our soul abides.
 But tasks in hours of insight will'd
 Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

And he taught me ' Self-Dependence ' :—

' Ah, once more,' I cried, ' ye Stars, ye Waters,
 On my heart your mighty charm renew :
 Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
 Feel my soul becoming vast like you.'

Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
 Undistracted by the sights they see,
 These demand not that the things without them
 Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

And with joy the stars perform their shining
 And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll.
 For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
 All the fever of some differing soul.

Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
 In what state God's other works may be,
 In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
 These attain the mighty life you see.

O air-born Voice ! long since, severely clear,
 A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear.
 ' Resolve to be thyself : and know, that he
 Who finds himself, loses his misery.'

Arnold, ' the gentle sceptic ' reminded us that :—

The seeds of godlike powers are in us still.

In two lines he crystallised the great truth :—

To its own impulse every creature stirs :
Live by thy light, and Earth will live by hers.

It was Arnold's belief that "Had it been a man's duty to believe in a specific revelation it would have been God's duty to make that revelation credible."

And of course I should return to the inspiration of Wordsworth. But I shall not begin quoting him again. Only this :—

Heaven-born, the soul a heavenward course must hold ;
Beyond the visible world she soars to seek
(For what delights the sense is false and weak)
Ideal Form, the universal mould.
The wise man, I affirm, can find no rest
In that which perishes ; nor will he lend
His heart to aught that doth on time depend.

Trying to Comprehend.

The Hebrews and the Greeks gave strained effort, through the greatest minds amongst them, to understand man's life in relation to the world in which he lives. How far their insight, their groping, into the something beyond carried them we have seen. Their knowledge of science, of the history of the human race earlier than their own times, was far less than our knowledge to-day. But still the ultimate mysteries remain unsolved—vastly widened though our knowledge of the

universe is. The search goes on. To the end the human mind will persist in its speculations. And in continued speculations and scientific achievements ever fresh knowledge will grow more and more. Man is yet young as years are counted in the history of his planet. Our vision is immeasurably enlarged ; our conceptions more profound. Outworn ideas and beliefs crumble away. A new spiritual world arises on the ashes of the old. The immensities of the universe as we now see them, the profundities of new discoveries, the far-reaching conception of a world of four dimensions which defies the limitations of the human mind to envisage in actual being—all these leave the minds of thinking men and women unsatisfied with systems of organised traditional religion that served their day and generation, but somehow are inadequate to-day.

“ There is reason to think that this conception (that is, a mystic spiritual conception) of religion appeals more and more strongly to the younger generation to-day. It brings an intense feeling of relief to many who have been distressed by being told that religion is bound up with certain events of antiquity, the historicity of which it is in some cases difficult to establish ; with a cosmology which has been definitely disproved, and with a philosophy which they cannot make their own. It allows us what George Meredith calls ‘ the rapture of the forward view.’ It brings home to

us the meaning of the promise made by the Johannine Christ, that there are many things as yet hid from humanity which will in the future be revealed by the Spirit of Truth." (*Outspoken Essays*.)

All recent discussions of personal survival after death and "Where are the Dead?" were silly and futile. The human mind can no more imagine a world coming out of nothingness than a world returning to nothingness. There can be no definite answer, yea or nay, to a question that is beyond the scope of finite minds. If an eminent scientist tells me that there is no positive evidence of personal survival, the statement leaves me unmoved. In the present state of positive knowledge there could be no other answer. The scientific man can tell you nothing of how life began. He can tell nothing of what death signifies and involves. And perhaps it is best for us that we should not know.

Like Alfred Tennyson, I "faintly trust the larger hope." Like Augustine, "I want to know God and my own soul; these two things, and no third whatever." I would say with Julian Huxley: "My religion is life."

You may say all this is vagueness; an attitude of mind. Yet, it is the essential vagueness of most of us. At least it is as far as I have got. Perhaps, at bottom, it is as far as any man has got.

Conclusion.

I make no attempt to answer the question, "Is some form of institution not necessary for Christians?" People will always be drawn together by a common impulse to communion, to modes of worship, to ceremonial, to propaganda. Such institutions and communions are legion. I am disposed to endorse a statement of the Dean of St. Paul's: "I believe that the aberrations or exaggerations of institutionalism have been, and are, more dangerous, and further removed from the spirit of Christianity than those of mysticism, and that we must look to the latter type, rather than to the former, to give life to the next religious revival."

The problem of the future, as Professor Julian Huxley sees it, is "How to organise religion that the Church's creeds and ritual shall be comprehensive (and yet not colourless and general), while permitting freedom for the individual worshipper to make his own religious life intense and personal (and yet not bigoted nor obscurantist)."

"Luckily," the Professor adds, "it is not for me to suggest a solution."

Professor Julian Huxley, answering the sneer that critics criticise but never set up any system of their own, declares that he is content to see one step forward, provided he is sure it is in the right

direction. He adds, "I am sure that the single step at present needed is for those who combine respect for science and intellectual truth with love of what is best in the spirit of religion to leave the particulars on one side and return to the basis of the general and the fundamental. Do not let us make the mistake of confusing religion with particular forms of Christianity with which we are familiar, nor pay the system which we are attacking the unwarranted compliment of assuming it universal or permanent. Let us get away from theology and back to religion."

One is obliged to say that if it had not been for institutional Christianity, Christianity would have perished. I know also that without institutional means of worship, ritual and ceremony, vast numbers would feel bereft of the devotional consolations of religion.

All that does not prevent me from venturing to say that organised ecclesiastical Christianity has done a great disservice to Jesus of Nazareth. It has blurred the light which shone on the hills of Galilee. Ecclesiastics, professors, Biblical scholars and preachers have created for themselves and for us problems which defy solution ; problems that are answered only with crooked answers ; problems that need to be discussed and debated with as much expenditure of brain-power and with the same range of technical knowledge as

scientific men give to intricate problems of science. Emerson stated that Christianity has become a Mythus, as the poetic teaching of Greece and Egypt before it.

Argument upon argument, doctrine against doctrine, volume upon volume, till the student's library overflows. And still they come, volume upon volume. That is the result of ecclesiastical history. Emerson describes it: "Historical Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion. As it appears to us and as it has appeared for ages, it is not the doctrine of the soul, but exaggerations of the personal, the positive, the ritual. It has dwelt, it dwells, with noxious exaggeration about the *person* of Jesus. . . . By this Eastern monarchy of a Christianity, which indolence and fear have built, the friend of man is made the injurer of man. The manner in which His name is surrounded with expressions, which were once sallies of admiration and love, but are now petrified into official titles, kills all generous sympathy and liking. All who hear me, feel that the language that describes Christ to Europe and America is not the style of friendship and enthusiasm to a good and noble heart, but is appropriated and formal—paints a demigod, as the Orientals or the Greek would describe Osiris or Apollo. Accept the injurious impositions of our early catechetical instruction, and even honesty and self-denial were but

splendid sins if they did not wear the Christian name. One would rather be

“A pagan, suckled in a creed outworn.”

Again Emerson wrote long ago : “ The stationariness of religion ; the assumption that the age of inspiration is past, that the Bible is closed ; the fear of degrading the character of Jesus by representing him as a man,—indicate with sufficient clearness the falsehood of our theology. . . .

“ And now let us do what we can to rekindle the smouldering, nigh quenched fire on the altar. The evils of the Church that now is are manifest. The question returns, what shall we do ? I confess, all attempts to project and establish a Cultus with new rites and forms seem to me in vain. Faith makes us, and not we it, and faith makes its own forms. All attempts to contrive a system are as cold as the new worship introduced by the French to the goddess of Reason,—to-day, pasteboard and filigree, and ending to-morrow in madness, and murder. Rather let the breath of new life be breathed by you through the forms already existing. For, if once you are alive, you shall find they shall become plastic and new. The remedy to their deformity is, first, Soul, and second, Soul, and evermore, Soul. . . .

“ It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was ; that He speaketh, not spake. The true Christianity—a faith like

Christ's in the infinitude of man—is lost. None believeth in the soul of man, but only in some man or person old and departed. . . . Once leave your own knowledge of God, your own sentiment, and take secondary knowledge, as St. Paul's, or George Fox's, or Swedenborg's, and you get wide from God with every year this secondary form lasts, and if, as now, for centuries,—the chasm yawns to that breadth, that men can scarcely be convinced there is in them anything Divine.”

Emerson's religion is the religion defined by Whitehead—solitariness ; and the “Over-soul.” Man needs only his own verdict ; his thoughts come from *within*, responding to an inspiration, to a personal intuition that ‘fires the heart with its presence.’

Once more how true is Emerson : “It is of no use to preach to me from without. I can do that too easily myself. Jesus speaks always from within, and in a degree that transcends all others. In that is the miracle. That includes the miracle. My soul believes beforehand that it is so to be. All men stand continually in the expectation of the appearance of such a teacher. . . .

“The Supreme Critic on all the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere ; that Unity, that Over-soul, within

which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other ; that common heart of which all sincere conversation is the worship, to which all right action is submission ; that overpowering reality which confutes our tricks and talents, and constrains every one to pass for what he is."

And so it is.

We live by admiration, hope and love,
And even as these are well and wisely fix'd,
In dignity of being we ascend.

THE STORY OF ST. PAUL

THE MAN, THE PERSECUTOR AND THE MARTYR

IT has been said quite truly that everything connected with a great original genius like St. Paul has an interest and fascination that is not likely ever to pass away.

In his essay, "Judaism and St. Paul," Mr. C. G. Montefiore asks, "What sort of man was Paul before the conversion near Damascus, before the great outward or inward event which changed his outlook, his beliefs, and his activities? What had he felt and experienced? By what inner processes, if at all, was the conversion led up to and prepared? What were the earlier influences to which Paul had been subjected? What were his environment, his faith, his yearnings, struggles, and ideals? More specifically, we would fain know what sort of Jew this man Paul actually was, seeing that several Judaisms existed in the first century."

The Man.

These and other questions are difficult to answer. St. Paul was probably born about the same time as Christ, who died at the age of thirty. It is very unlikely that St. Paul ever saw Him. Paul was a Jew, but a Roman citizen by birth. He was a working artisan, a "tent-maker," but far better educated than a modern artisan. He has been described as "bald-headed, bow-legged, strongly built, a man small in size, with meeting eyebrows, with a rather large nose, full of grace, for at times he looked like a man, and at times he had the face of an angel. His temperament was choleric and impetuous, his nervous organism finely strung and quivering with sensibility; there was nothing in him of the impassive stoic." He studied under Gamaliel, one of the great Rabbis at Jerusalem.

Probably he meant, says Dean Inge, to be a Jerusalem Rabbi himself, still practising his trade, as the Rabbis usually did. "He suffered," continues the Dean, "from some obscure physical trouble, the nature of which we can only guess. It was probably epilepsy, a disease which is compatible with great powers of endurance and great mental energy, as is proved by the cases of Julius Cæsar and Napoleon. He was liable to mystic trances, in which some have found a confirmation of the supposition that he was epileptic."

It is curious that except for the middle-age period of his life little is known of St. Paul. The life of St. Paul, it has been said, is like a manuscript of which the beginning and end are irrevocably lost. All that we really know of his life lies in the thirty years between A.D. 36 and A.D. 66 which form its central period.

Legends.

St. Luke drops the curtain on St. Paul when at the time of his first Roman imprisonment he was "teaching with all boldness." He probably suffered seven imprisonments. There are legends, of course, of St. Paul's last days. If you are in Rome and pass along the celebrated Appian Way outside the city walls, you cannot fail to be abundantly reminded of these legends, and many other memories and memorials of this queen of roads that once was. The Appian Way to-day leaves you with a mournful sense of desolation, but what scenes has it witnessed in centuries long forgotten?

St. Paul on his journey to Rome (perhaps as a prisoner) certainly came by the Appian Way. And one cannot forbear to enter the small Church of "Domine, Quo Vadis?" Its legend is that St. Peter, when flying from Rome and the persecution of Nero, met an apparition of his Master, to whom he put the question, "Domine, Quo Vadis?" ("Lord, whither goest thou?") "To

Rome, to be crucified again." Whereupon the Apostle retraced his steps to meet his death. The church marks the spot ; but there is nothing of this kind in legend to tell of St. Paul. Instead, we have this :—

" At his first trial—perhaps before Nero in person—he seems to have been remanded ; but at a second trial we learn from unanimous Christian tradition that he was condemned to martyrdom, by decapitation, probably, as he was a Roman citizen. His 'trophy,' or martyr's memorial, was a familiar object in Rome in the second century, but his death was so lonely and unrecorded that not even tradition has preserved a single trustworthy detail respecting it. All that we can see from his last writings is that he remained heroic, indomitable, cheerful, faithful to the end, never doubting, amid an apparent failure which the world might well have regarded as absolute, that the hundredfold harvest of eternity would spring up from the grain which he had sown."

Well Educated.

We have to remember, Dr. Hastings says, that according to the standards of his time St. Paul was highly educated. " His bent was intellectual, and it was encouraged by his training. When he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, he must have heard problems discussed like the faith of Abraham or the origin of evil desire in connection with the

Fall of Man. These active discussions took with him the place that books do with us. St. Paul was learned as his age counted learning, and he could not help treating the questions that arose after the manner of the learned."

I am not writing a theological essay, and it does not come within my scope to discuss in detail Pauline theology in relation to Christ's own teaching. I shall later refer to the influences that shaped Pauline theology and leave the reader who may be further interested to follow up the subject for himself. He will find a whole library of books to drive him silly. But some later books are of great interest.

But, first let us see what more is known about Paul the man, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone ; a man like unto ourselves.

Secret of His Success.

The secret of Paul's unparalleled success and his dominance is simply the secret of all great men in religion, in politics, in all spheres of human endeavour. It is burning zeal, undaunted courage, will-power born of inward conviction, and in Paul's case self-sacrifice and profound assurance that he was fulfilling a mission to which he had received a special call from God. He was a great organiser, reformer, and theologian.

Paul (or Saul) of Tarsus in his earlier life was a learned Pharisee of the school of the Rabbi

Gamaliel. "It was hardly wonderful that he should have imbibed the spirit of fanatical hatred against that new and immeasurable force of the Gospel, which to a Pharisee seemed to involve the overthrow of all his most cherished idols and formalities."

The Pharisees were a so-called "Jewish sect," or school. They took their stand upon the Law, "together with those inferences drawn from its written letter which had, partly from time immemorial, been current as a sacred tradition among the people." They scrupulously observed certain ordinances relating to things clean and unclean. They wished the State and all its political doings to be directed and measured by the standard of the Law, without regard for the priestly and aristocratic families. There were sharp differences between the religious beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Persecutor.

Paul of Tarsus became a violent persecutor of Nazarenes. The late Dean Farrar describes this part of Paul's life: "He haled men and even women to prison, hunted them out for punishment through every synagogue, scourged them, voted for their execution, and did his best to make them blaspheme. The persecution culminated in the martyrdom of St. Stephen by stoning, and on this occasion the executioners

laid their garments at the feet of Saul (Paul). Fanaticism enabled him to witness that horrible death, but he was haunted long years afterwards by the memory of the angel face, the light of which he had seen quenched in blood."

When he had finished his work as an inquisitor at Jerusalem, Paul set out to root out the odious sect from Damascus. On this journey he met the crisis of his life in a dazzling vision.

The Vision.

Dean Inge asks : " What caused the sudden change which so astonished the survivors among his victims ? To suppose that nothing prepared for the vision near Damascus, that the apparition in the sky was a mere ' bolt from the blue,' is an impossible theory." The Dean answers the question : " An undercurrent of dissatisfaction, almost of disgust, at the arid and unspiritual seminary teaching of the Pharisees now surged up and came very near the surface. His bigotry sustained him as a persecutor for a few weeks more, but how, if he could himself see what the dying Stephen said that he saw ? Would not that be welcome liberation ? The vision came in the desert, where men see visions and hear voices to this day. They were very common in the desert of Gobi when Marco Polo traversed it."

What an amazing transformation, a complete parting of the ways : from self-sufficient, arro-



[Photo : Anderson.]

ST. PAUL

(After the painting by Rubens, in the Prado, Madrid.)

gant Rabbi, from a travelling lecturer on philosophy, Paul becomes a fervid preacher and missionary of Christianity, a missionary amongst his own people, the Jews, an Apostle of the Gentiles. "Nothing exasperated the Jews more than to see St. Paul fishing so successfully in their waters."

He began to preach the very gospel which he had spent his life hitherto in trying to destroy. "Driven from Damascus," says one biographer of Paul, "by Jewish animosity, he contrived to escape down the city wall in a basket, and made his way to Jerusalem where, as was natural, he was received with coldness and suspicion. After a trance and vision in the temple, in which his future destiny was foreshadowed to him, he was driven to Tarsus by a plot to murder him."

Scourged and Imprisoned.

At Lystra on one occasion he was stoned by the Jews and left for dead ; he probably carried on him the marks of his wounds to his last day. He travelled everywhere, preaching and founding churches. At Troas he saw the vision of the "man of Macedonia" which led to his great decision to carry the Gospel into Europe. At Philippi he was scourged and imprisoned ; he was driven by the Jews from Thessalonica, and so from place to place. Probably all the time he was supporting himself by his trade of tent-

maker. Often he had to flee from plots to murder him. He had to face not only all the hardships of travel, but "all the cruelty of the fanaticism which rages like a consuming fire through the religious history of the East."

Dean Inge believes that Paul intended to go to Rome "and thence to Spain—a scheme worthy of the restless genius of Alexander. He saw Rome indeed, but as a prisoner. The rest of his life is lost in obscurity. The writer of the Acts does not say that the two years' imprisonment ended in his execution; and if it was so, it is difficult to see why such a fact should be suppressed. If the charge against him was at last dismissed, because the accusers did not think it worth while to come to Rome to prosecute it, St. Luke's silence is more explicable. In any case, we may regard it as almost certain that St. Paul ended his life under a Roman axe during the reign of Nero."

Such then, in brief, was the life of St. Paul. I have tried to show what manner of man he was and the life he led prior to the time of his vision on the road to Damascus, and the mystery which surrounds his last days. He was very human, very practical; "alone among the first preachers of Christianity, he stands before us as a living man. . . . He is a saint without a luminous halo."

For this reason, Dean Inge remarks, Paul "has

never been the object of popular devotion. . . . St. Paul has been spared the honour or the ignomy of being coaxed and wheedled by the piety of paganised Christianity. No tender fairy-tales are attached to his cult ; he remains for us what he was in the flesh. It is even possible to feel an active dislike for him."

Non-Christian Opinions.

The learned Dean, with characteristic directness, also tells us what non-Christian writers thought of St. Paul. Nietzsche describes him as "one of the most ambitious of men, whose superstition was only equalled by his cunning. A much-tortured, much-to-be-pitied man, an exceedingly unpleasant person both to himself and to others. . . . He had a great deal on his conscience. He alludes to enmity, murder, sorcery, idolatry, drunkenness, and the love of carousing."

The Dean declares that "Renan, who could never have made himself ridiculous by such ebullitions as these, does not disguise his repugnance for the 'ugly little Jew' whose character he can neither understand nor admire." These outbursts of personal animosity, the Dean reminds us, show how vividly Paul's figure stands out from the canvas. "There are very few historical characters who are alive enough to be hated." Later studies, in our own day, have

given us a more faithful estimate of Paul than the carping criticism of men like Renan.

It has been left for the scholars of the present century to show that Paul was the greatest of missionaries and pioneers, and "only incidentally a great theologian." Some will, doubtless, question the last statement and affirm that Paul was first and foremost a great theologian, and a great missionary for his own theology.

The ordinary man must leave these things to the scholars who have knowledge ; albeit, in Biblical criticism, scholars and experts are not always in agreement.

We saw that Paul was by birth probably a Jew and that in his younger days he was a student of Gamaliel the Rabbi, and other Jewish teachers. "He was a religious theorist and teacher long before he heard of Jesus of Nazareth, and he appears in the New Testament narrative at first as the bitter critic and antagonist of the Nazarenes."

"What will be clear to anyone," writes Mr. H. G. Wells in his well-known History, "who reads St. Paul's various Epistles, side by side with the Gospels, is that his mind was saturated by an idea which does not appear at all prominently in the reported sayings and teachings of Jesus, the idea of a sacrificial person who is offered up to God as an atonement for sin. What Jesus preached was a new birth of the human

soul ; what Paul preached was the ancient religion of priest and altar and propitiatory bloodshed. Jesus was to him the Easter Lamb, that traditional human victim without spot or blemish, who haunts all the religions of the dark white peoples."

Books that are not St. Paul's.

For any ordinary layman, unless he has made a special study, it is very difficult to get at the real facts about St. Paul and his teaching.

I would permit myself one remark. Would it not be a thing of great value if Bishops would combine to issue a handbook on the findings of modern Biblical criticism, recognised as generally accepted as true by modern scholars ? Such a little handbook would go a long way to clarify people's minds. Certainly it would be a more practical, useful, and helpful work on the part of the Bishops than wrangling about a revised Prayer Book.

For instance, if the uninformed person studies the Epistle to the Hebrews to discover something of St. Paul's theology, does he know that St. Paul is not really the author of that epistle ? Professor Peake says, to attribute that epistle to St. Paul is " a feat impossible to anyone who has really understood the Pauline theology and the theology of that Epistle." But in all our Bibles we read : "*The Epistle of Paul the Apostle*

to the Hebrews." Very perplexing, then, to be told, "it is very strange that this should ever have been regarded as an Epistle of St. Paul. It makes no claim to this character in the oldest form of the title"; neither the "style," the "argument," nor the "theological standpoint" is that of St. Paul. It is still part of the title of the Epistle to the Hebrews, all the same.

The treatise was written, according to Dr. Barnes, about the year A.D. 80, "possibly for Jews in Rome," but "from quite early times men of insight saw that St. Paul could not have been its author." And again, another authority declares, "the 'Pastoral Epistles,' are probably not genuine, though the defence of them is not quite a desperate undertaking." There are one or two other doubtful Epistles, but "all the other Epistles seem to be firmly established."

The Jewish Religion.

I shall try to indicate briefly some features of the Jewish religion as expounded in the chapter on St. Paul in *Outspoken Essays*. The main distinctive feature in Jewish faith is its historical character and the doctrine of final causes, or the philosophy that discourses about the end, or design, for which the world was created. The whole of history is an unfolding of the divine purpose, and for the Jew this held an importance which it never had for, say, a

Greek thinker. There was the notion of a covenant ; the Law was equal to, or even exalted above, God. The Rabbis even represent the Deity as studying the Law. Hence the spirit of Jewish exclusiveness and narrow ecclesiasticism.

Above Zion, the centre of the earth, rise seven heavens, in the highest of which the Deity has his throne. " The bad receive in this life the reward for any small merits which they may possess ; the sins of the good must be atoned for ; but merits, as in Roman Catholicism, may be stored and transferred. There was no official Messianic doctrine, only a mass of vague fancies and beliefs, grouped round the central idea of the appearance on earth of a supernatural Being, who should establish a theocracy of some kind at Jerusalem. The righteous dead will be raised to take part in this Kingdom. The course of the world is thus divided into two epochs—' this age ' and ' the age to come.' A catastrophe will end the former and inaugurate the latter. The promised deliverer is now waiting in heaven with God, until his hour comes."

What Scholars Say:

St. Paul must have learned all that from Gamaliel. " It formed the framework of his theology for many years after his conversion, and was only partially thrown off, under the influence

of mystical experience and of Greek ideas during the period covered by his letters."

Paul, then, was influenced by his early training and by the Greek mystery-religions and the current philosophy of his day ; it is very improbable, says Professor Peake, that Paul was so indifferent to the teaching of Jesus, or to the life of Jesus, as is frequently asserted. The same writer says, " we ought never to lose sight of the fact that Paul was a suspected person in the Christian Church, that much of his teaching was cordially disliked by many of his fellow-Christians, and that he was bitterly persecuted by a section of them." Perhaps I had better quote the passage more fully :—

" Are we, then, to suppose that he left himself open to the serious charge that his teaching fundamentally diverged from the teaching of Jesus ? Could he have afforded to give such a handle to enemies who were only too ready to denounce him as no true Apostle of Jesus, as ignorance of the Lord's teaching and indifference to the facts of His life would have yielded him ? How could he have gone to those who were his seniors in the Apostleship and laid his Gospel before them without being assured that his teaching was in harmony with the teaching of Jesus ? And how on their part could these Apostles have recognised the validity of Paul's Gospel and its genuinely Christian character if they had felt that it had

been constructed in complete indifference to the teaching of the Founder? For this purpose it was not indeed necessary that everything Paul said should already have been said by Jesus. What was peculiar to Paulism was very largely its interpretation of Christ's death and resurrection. But even here he was only carrying forward into a developed theory what the Apostles had already taught in a general way."

Was St. Paul the man who best understood Jesus and best carried on His work, or did Paul deflect Christianity into another channel, is a question which has clouded with a doubt many minds. It leaves others with no doubt whatever that St. Paul "best understood the great Teacher and most successfully carried on His work."

I quote again Dean Inge, who has written, probably, one of the best essays that was ever written on St. Paul. "There was something transitional about all St. Paul's teaching." It is useless, says the Dean, to deny that St. Paul regarded Christianity as, at least, on one side, a mystery-religion. "It was as a mystery-religion that Europe accepted Christianity." And the three chief characteristics of mystery-religion were: "First, rites of purification, both moral and ceremonial; second, the promise of spiritual communion with some deity, who through them enters into his worshippers; third, the hope of immortality, which the Greeks often called

‘deification,’ and which was secured to those who were initiated.”

It was, however, “as a community, a realisation of corporate unity among its members” which they represented to themselves as a “mystery”—a mystical union between the Head and members of a body. “It is in this conception, and not its ritual details, that we are justified in finding a real and deep influence of the mystery-cults upon Christianity.”

“It is impossible to guess what would have become of Christianity if he (St. Paul) had never lived ; we cannot even be sure that the religion of Europe would be called by the name of Christ.” He was a man who would ‘follow the gleam’ ; “his personal religion was, in essence, a pure mysticism ; he worships a Christ whom he has experienced as a living presence in his soul.” St. Paul was a religious theorist before ever he heard of Jesus ; and no doubt after his conversion he built up a subtle theological system of his own weaving, and had to reckon, to a certain extent, with the Paganism of his day. “But the labours of St. Paul made an all-important parting of the ways. Their result was that Christianity became a European religion, while Judaism fell back upon its old traditions.”

The Mystery-Religions.

Dr. Barnes writes, “The later Epistles contain

many echoes of the pagan mystery-religions. In the pagan 'mysteries,' Professor Gilbert Murray says, men sought 'for some magic of redemption in which purification and passionate penitence should count for more than a mere upright life.'

. . . It was natural that converts to Christianity from these forms of faith should retain many of their old faiths. . . . With their magic St. Paul had no sympathy ; he remained a Jew for whom faith issuing in righteousness was all-important. But, as Dean Inge remarks, though he 'was ready to fight to the death against the Judaising of Christianity, he was willing to take the first step, and a long one, towards the paganising of it.' "

The debt which Christianity owes to St. Paul, as Dr. Barnes says, is so vast that we need not try to measure it. "There is indeed a danger that he, and not Jesus, may be thought of as the virtual founder of the Christian faith. Against such exaggeration we ought to guard ourselves. In a sense, the Apostle created Christian theology, but in so doing he only gave form to Messianic claims which Christ made for himself."

The Debatable Point.

After I have read all these authorities, the debatable point remains : Was St. Paul responsible for diverting human thought and Christian teaching about fundamentals into a false channel ; or was his success, due to the truth of his teaching,

recognised and accepted as such by humanity, and as a true interpretation of the teaching of his Master ?

“ St. Luke was a most intelligent man ; he enjoyed for years the closest intercourse with St. Paul and heard him preach again and again. It is a paradox to say that he did not understand him.” (Dr. Gore’s *Commentary*.)

I recall Mr. Augustine Birrell’s saying, which is as applicable here as in the connection he used it : “ Had it been a man’s duty to believe in a specific revelation it would have been God’s duty to make that revelation credible.” As it is, what is credible to one half of the ecclesiastics of the world is incredible to the other half. How much of the pure teaching of Jesus of Nazareth has been unconsciously perverted ?

Enquiring Layman.

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